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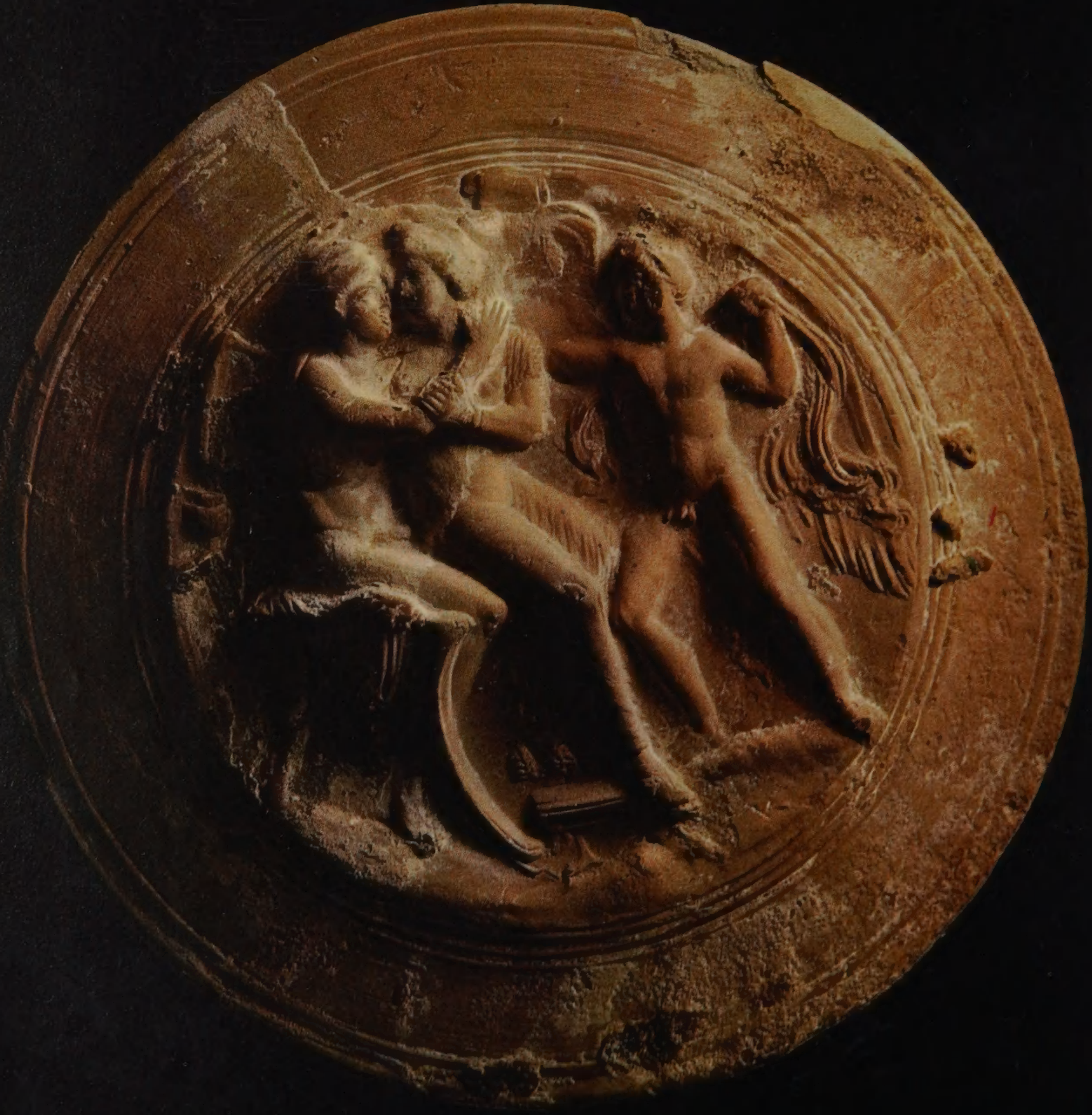

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TEXT BY JOHN BOARDMAN
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Love in Greek art and life

by John Boardman

> . . . something to heal the sick and comfort the afflicted, to refresh the memory of those who have been in love and educate those who have not. For no one escaped love altogether, and no one ever will, so long as beauty exists and the eyes can see.

The Greek author Longus (second century A.D.) explains the purpose of his famous love story, *Daphnis and Chloe,* with words of such a modern ring that we might well believe that the Greek view of love and our own are not so very unlike. Of all ancient peoples the Greeks were supremely aware of the dignity of man and of his emotions. They were humanists in their literature and their art, yet the divine was never very far away and since they were ready always to seek the divine in man, so they were ready to demonstrate man's dilemmas in terms of stories of the divine and in personifications of his deepest emotions. In fact their view of love seems bewilderingly diverse, even to change from century to century. It could be expressed in acts of religious devotion more familiar in some Eastern shrine; in poignantly human poetry and prose; in shameless, lustful detail, or as a veiled mystery; it could personify man's most spiritual aspirations, the very life-force of the universe, or mirror his basest passion. It is this diversity which we seek to explore in the first part of this book, through mythology, religion, literature and art.

We begin to seize the detail of Greek life and thought in the eighth century B.C. – the age of Homer – for the debt to Greece's glorious Minoan and Mycenaean past is slight and her Bronze Age not illumined by literature or narrative arts. In this dawn of the expression of Classical Greece, Aphrodite, goddess of love, and Eros, her child and minister, appear as far more primeval powers. Even divinities suffer birth, though they are deathless. To Homer Aphrodite is the child of Zeus and Dione, but darker stories were told, spun from the creation myths of the older civilisations of the Near East. In the beginning there was Earth (Ge) and Heaven (Ouranos). Their child was Kronos who was suborned by his mother to castrate his father with a sickle. The blood spattered to earth and from it were born Furies and Giants. The genitals fell into the sea:

The white foam surges from the deathless flesh.
A maiden grows within it, and draws near
First holy Cythera, then the sea-washed isle
Of Cyprus, and steps forth in awesome grace
A goddess, on the sward which springs to bear
Her comely feet. Her name, for gods and men,
Is Aphrodite.

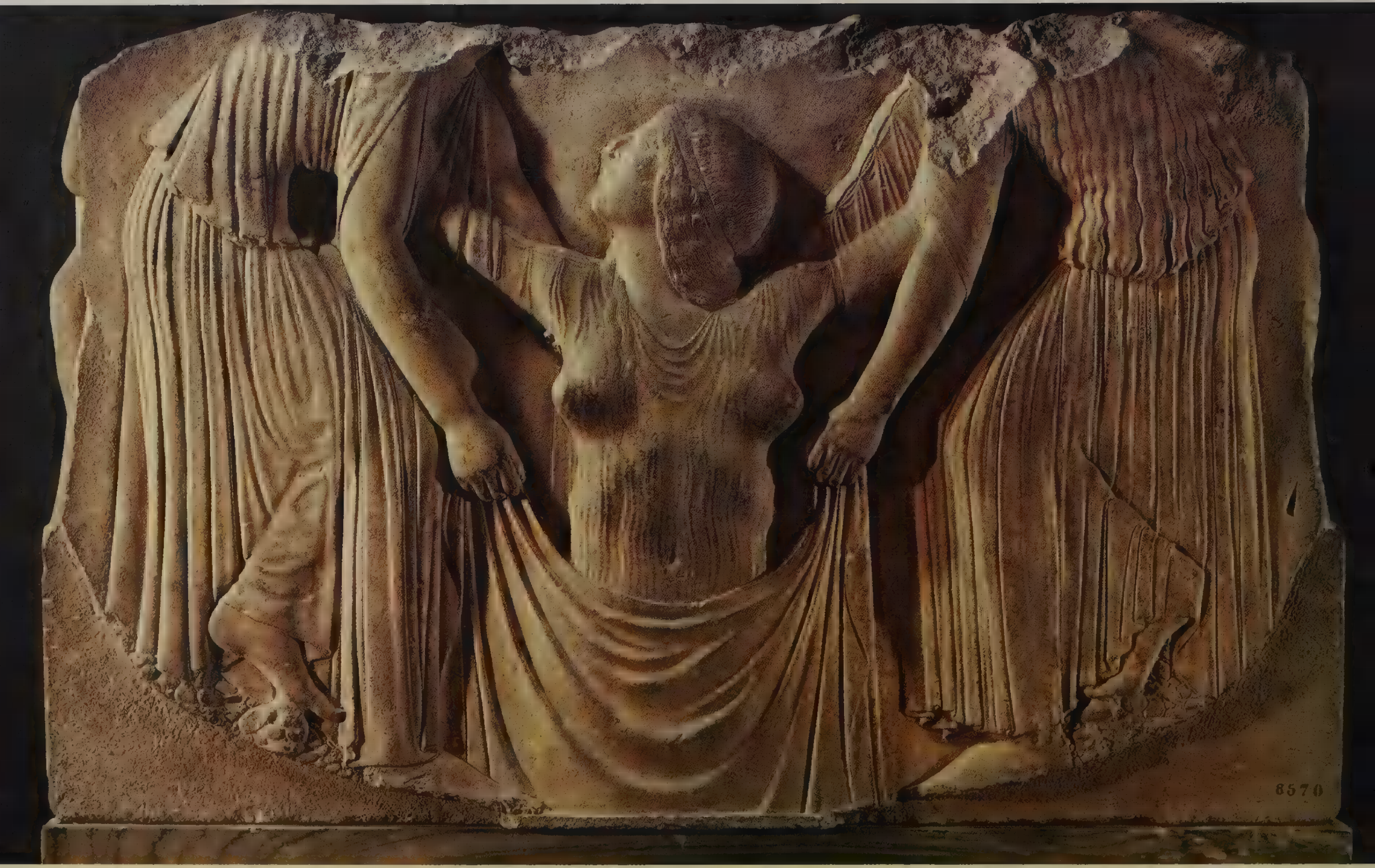
Page 6: Aphrodite seated in Adonis' lap, with Eros. Clay relief cover for a pyxis (box), from Italy. Fourth century B.C. London: British Museum (D 207). W. 0.24 m

The sea at the sacred island of Delos.

Aphros means foam, the seed of castrated Heaven. The story is Hesiod's, a poet writing about 700 B.C., and it is easy to see in the birth of this terrifying deity echoes of Eastern stories of the birth of a goddess who brings fertility for men and crops, who determines survival.

But in Hesiod Eros is older still, no charming spirit of affection, but, with Chaos and Earth, one of the three primordial beings and ready, with his fellow Himeros (Desire) to escort the new-born goddess to the company of the Olympian gods.

The stories are demonic and unpleasing, but they bring clearly to our attention what was always to be a prime function of these deities in the religious life of a society whose dependence on the continuing fertility of their stock and of their land was more immediately apparent to them than it is to us today. The Eastern stories are used to heighten the expression of awe and recognition of power. And since the functions of the Olympian deities were never as sharply defined in Greek religious practice as they were by Greek poets, we see Aphrodite in many parts of Greece assimilated either to the older fertility gods worshipped in Bronze-Age Greece, or to other Olympian deities whose traditional duties were related to hers: with Hera as mother of the gods and patroness of marriage; with Demeter as promoter of agriculture; even with



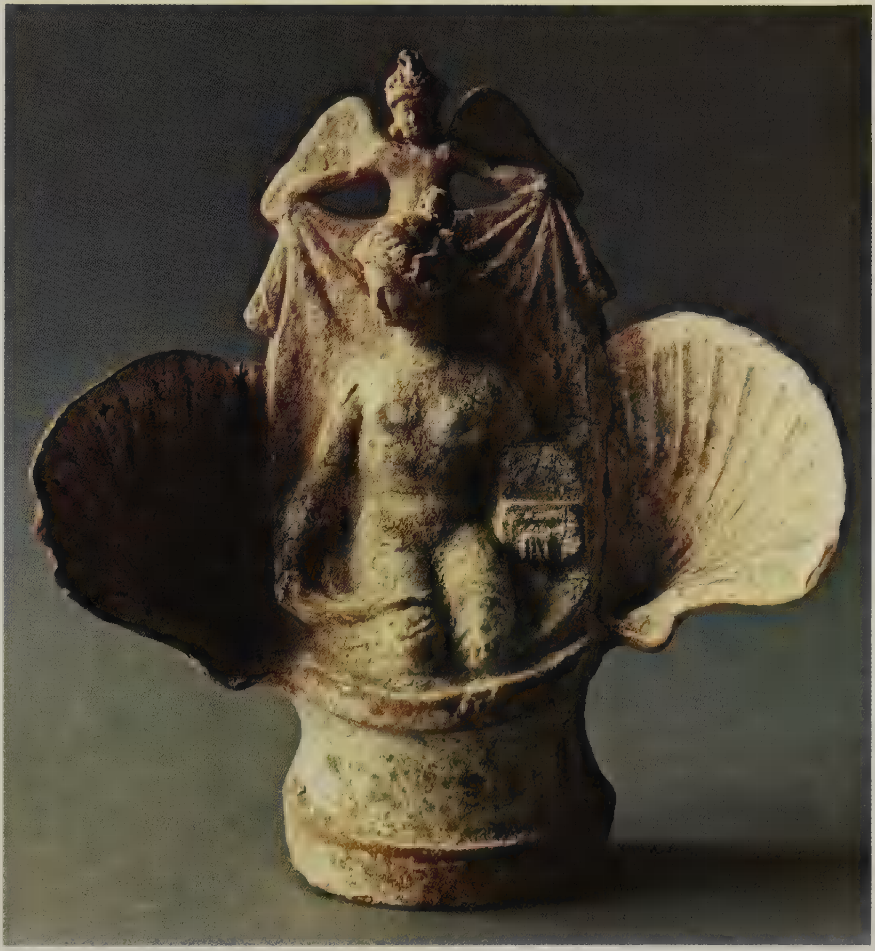
The Ludovisi Throne. Marble relief from part of the surround to a pit or altar, showing the new-born Aphrodite being received by nymphs upon a stony beach. *c.* 470 B.C. Rome: Terme Museum (152). H. 0.98 m

Pages 14–15: The temples and city of Selinus on the south coast of Sicily.

Persephone, Demeter's child, but also a deity of the Underworld and concerned in those resurrection stories which have mirrored the passing seasons of the crops for many cultures and religions.

It was characteristic, however, of Greek thought and art, that even these dire stories of primeval power and birth from sperm-flecked waves could be gracefully expressed in the images of young, winged Eros helping his goddess mother from the shore, and her reception by nymphs, ready with robes to swaddle her, like handmaids with a mistress at her bath rather than witnesses to the birth of an awesome divinity.

Hesiod was a farmer, a poet of Central Greece, bitterly conscious that men, and especially women, were born to toil and woe. Homer (by which I mean the poets of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), his senior, dealt with the traditional stories of the greatest event of Greek myth history, the war at Troy, rather than with the birth of the world or the hardships of his own day. His heroes are men writ large; his gods share man's weaknesses of jealousy, anger, spite, lust. Yet his is the first and, some would say, the finest expression of the Greek view of the divinity of man. Although the society he describes is unreal, a heightened reflection of an earlier age, tricked out in modern dress, he expresses it as a world of humanity and compassion in which the gods do not so much



Aphrodite emerging from a shell being received by Eros, who holds a cloak for her. Clay group from Corinth, Hellenistic. East Berlin: Pergamum Museum (8351). H. 0.21 m

determine man's conduct, as serve to justify his acts of will, to personify the rough justice of a heroic age. The Greeks found in Homer's poems an archetype for their conduct and beliefs, and his treatment of love, as goddess or emotion, might tell us more about Greek attitudes than do later poets and artists, preoccupied with situations or problems peculiar to their age or theme. In Homer there is no slighting of women. Andromache, Penelope, Nausicaa seem morally flawless and even Helen excusable. The enslaved, prizes of war, are treated with affection and respect – Briseis is returned to Achilles by Agamemnon, untouched. And they are real, not cyphers. The heroes themselves exchange all proper signs of respect and affection, often very deep affection, but without any hint of homosexual love.

Homer's love stories explore the full range of passion, devotion, even humour, with no lack of sympathetic sensual description which is by no means male-dominated. Helen's beauty is the immediate cause of the Trojan war, a cause we, and Homer's heroes, can recognise more readily than the remoter one of divine jealousy. Helen is aware of it and weeps for the distress she has brought to Greeks and Trojans, and when her lover-husband Paris returns, miraculously snatched from death in the battlefield, she can in one breath chide him for failing to pay the price of his adultery with his life, and welcome him to her bed. Aphrodite may be the agent, rescuing Paris and sending Helen to him, but the responses to love's logic are utterly human and even the Trojan elders, who have lost their sons for her and wish her away, can mutter as she passes and understand why men should fight for her.

Homer's Penelope, who waited for her husband Odysseus for twenty years and repudiated the attention of her many suitors, has remained a symbol of wifely devotion in Western literature and art. Since these were years in which Odysseus spent more time with nymphs (seven years with Calypso) or amorous sorceresses (Circe) than in the rigours of his voyages, his slowly awakened conscience can count for little beside her constancy. Only Hector does something to redeem our view of Homer's heroes in his compassion for his wife and child in the famous scene by the Scaean gate.

Laughter goes with love and when it goes against the lovers it is the goddess of love herself who is the butt. Homer stages the discomfiture of human passion with divine actors, in the song of Demodocus. In the Olympian family halls Aphrodite was the wife of Hephaistos, the lame blacksmith god and inventor, no beauty. Her lover was the brash god of war, Ares, but Hephaistos devised a trap for them. When he went travelling the lovers repaired to his bed and were immediately caught and immobilised in the net he had prepared. The Sun summoned him back to deride and threaten his catch:

> They will not want to linger in that clasp,
> Not for a moment, not for all their love.
> Theirs is a sleep of which they'll quickly tire.

His cries brought the gods running to watch and laugh, to admit even, as Hermes does:

> Three times as many chains might hold me fast
> And all you gods and goddesses look on,
> Still would I gladly choose to make my bed
> With golden Aphrodite.

The columns of the temple of Poseidon at Sunium in Attica.

The most sensuous description of physical love is also saved for a divine pair, Zeus and Hera, and not as an expression of mutual affection but as a demonstration of love's power, through a woman, over even the father of the gods. Hera seeks to distract Zeus from the events at Troy. She anoints and perfumes her body, plaits her shining locks, fastens the golden brooches on her dress, places her veil and sandals, and begs from Aphrodite her girdle in which

> All magic charms are worked, love and desire,
> The sweet bewitching moods which steal the wits
> From wisest men.

She bribes Sleep to aid her, and goes to meet Zeus on the slopes of Mount Ida:

> Beneath them gracious Earth put forth young grass,
> The dewy lotus, crocus, hyacinth,
> In soft and massy bed to carry them;
> And where they lay the glittering dewdrops fell
> Upon them from a fair and golden cloud.

Another victory for woman through love's arts.

Opposite page and below: The acropolis site of Lindos on the island of Rhodes.

In Greece's early literature we find the full diversity of the Greek view of love expressed long before Greek artists could make their contribution. The power of love is personified in Aphrodite and Eros, and demonstrated in the stories about figures of myth: the poet's natural medium. In later Greece a more direct expression of the human reaction becomes possible, but myth remains a common cloak for the exploration of human problems, and we may look now to the Classical Greek treatment of love in terms of divinity, myth and religion, before observing love in Greek life and society more closely.

Homer's Aphrodite could on occasion be little more than a figure of fun, running, tearful from a scratch in battle, to her father Zeus who counsels her to concentrate on her no less effective armoury of wiles and graces. She had other amorous adventures which barely conceal stories of her Eastern counterpart Astarte, the goddess of fertility. Astarte loved Tammuz (Dumuzi) who died, and whom she pursued to rescue in the Underworld. In Greek myth this becomes Aphrodite, enamoured of Adonis, who is killed by a boar. She negotiates with Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, that he should spend part of the year there, part with her in the world above. The crop-resurrection theme of the story is made explicit in the Adonis Festival in Athens, where women set on their roofs 'Adonis gardens' of seedlings which grew, then withered rapidly. But in Greek art it is the tender passion of Aphrodite for the handsome youth that is celebrated. The 'demon lovers' of Greek literature and myth are more often women than men.

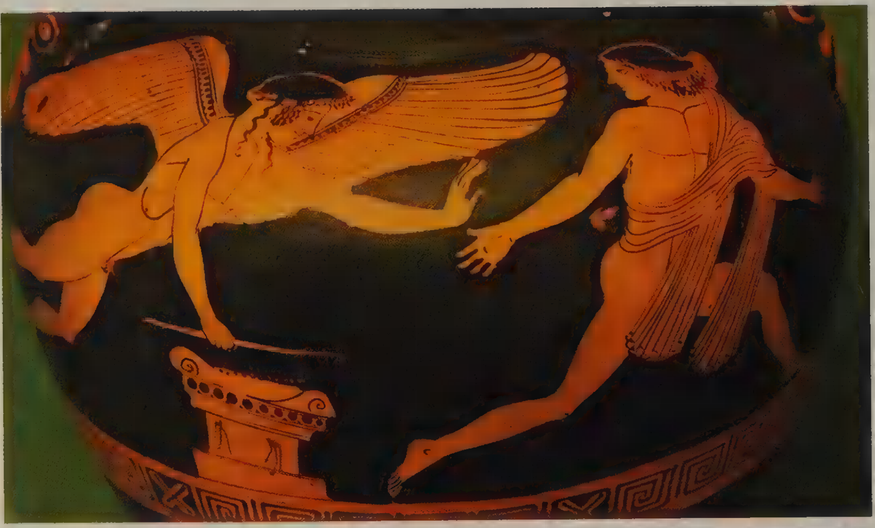
Eros was Aphrodite's senior in myth, and yet could be regarded as her child and there are even scenes of her suckling him as a baby. We think of him most readily as a baby Cupid, like a Renaissance putto, but in art he is seen first as an adolescent youth, and even without wings. Moreover, from the beginning he is associated with Himeros (Desire) and it is not uncommon to see a plurality of Erotes busy on Aphrodite's business, adjusting her dress at the Judgement of Paris or as fluttering agents in her service. When Menelaus, with his Greek allies, had taken Troy, he sought out Helen to kill her, but she bared her breast to him, and, overcome by her beauty, he relented and let drop his sword. The reaction was a human one, but Greek art expresses it with Aphrodite, a true goddess of sex in this case, standing between them, and a tiny Eros dashing a magic potion in Menelaus' eyes or crowning him. This is a good example of the way the Greeks could use myth to demonstrate a mortal reaction. Eros may also act more directly, and be seen carrying off a girl or boy. Such scenes are rare, and we can never be sure that he is not acting on behalf of another deity, since it is only in later Classical times that he claims a love-life of his own.

But in the fifth century he can be a scourge to lovers, generally boys, pursuing them with whips and sandals, poised to strike.

His most famous weapon was his bow, but this he does not acquire until the fourth century, when we begin too to find representations of him being instructed in its use by his mother. Love's darts seem somehow less frightening than his whip, and in Classical Greece we are more used to seeing him in domestic scenes: helping an Athenian bride to prepare for her husband; fastening Aphrodite's sandal; playing with a bird or wreath she holds out to him; himself as a child playing with knuckle-bones or animals.

The popular image of him becomes more generalised, more familiar, and it is understandable that at the same time it should be accompanied by a gradual change in his physique, becoming younger until he is the chubby infant of Hellenistic Greece, of the third and second centuries B.C., and Rome's Cupid. By

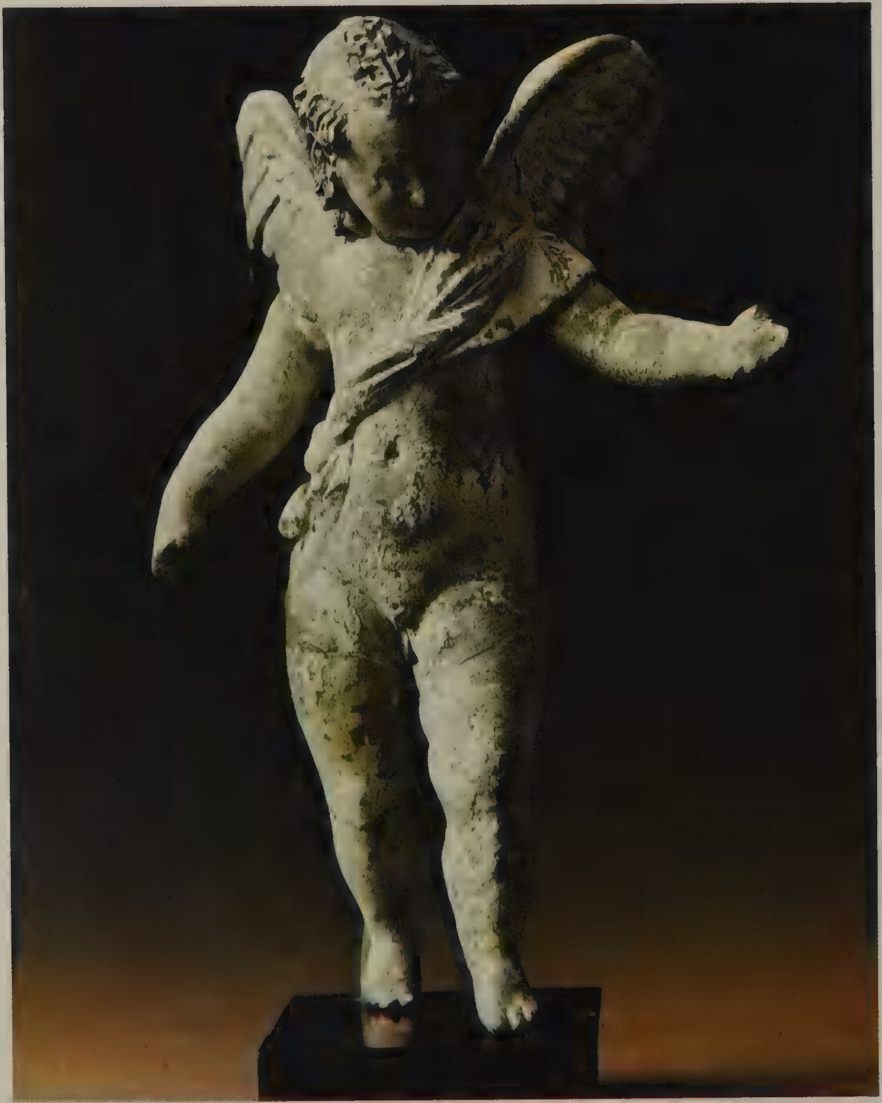
The setting of the sacred spring of Castalia at Delphi and the groves near by.



Top left: Eros with a whip chasing a boy, by an altar. Athenian red-figure amphora of *c.* 450 B.C. by the Oionokles Painter. London: British Museum (E 297).

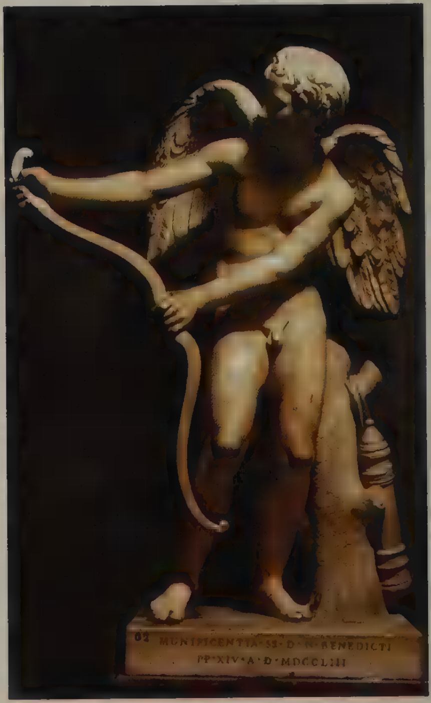
Below left: Eros. Clay figure, Hellenistic. Rome: Terme Museum.

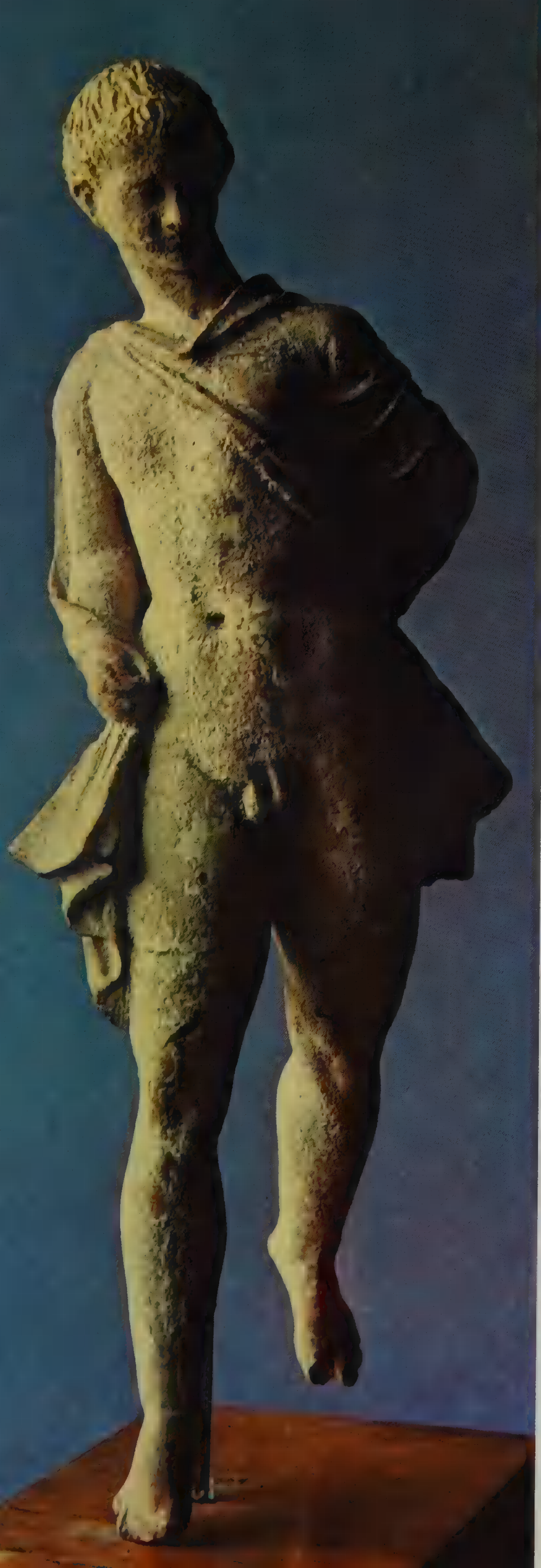
Below: Eros strings his bow. Roman copy of a statue of *c.* 330 B.C. by the Greek sculptor Lysippus. Rome: Capitoline Museum (5). H. 1.23 m

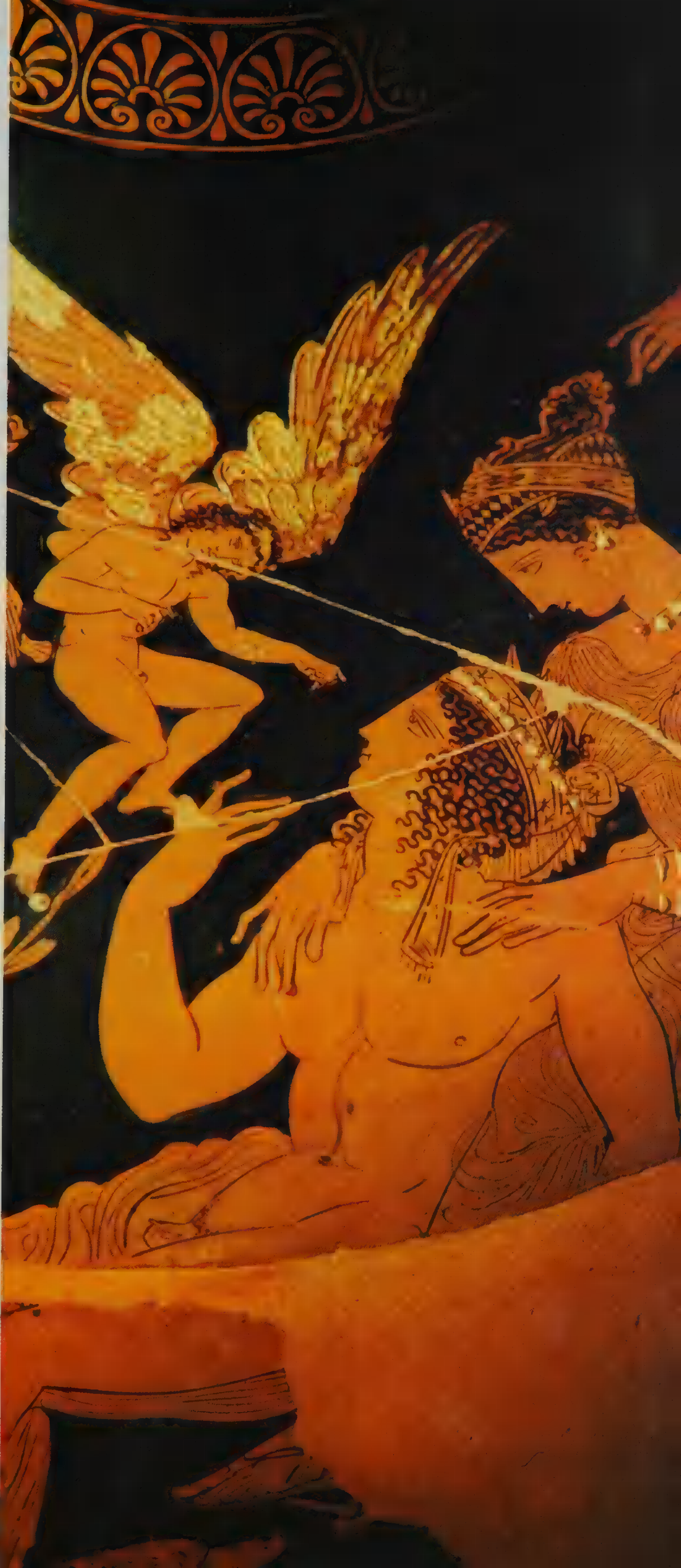


Opposite page: left: Flying figure of a youth (Eros?), from Myrina (Asia Minor). Clay, Hellenistic. East Berlin: Pergamum Museum (30219, 36). H. 0.26 m

Right: Adonis reclining in the lap of Aphrodite. Above them is Himeros (Desire) playing with a love-charm (*iunx*). Detail of an Athenian red-figure *hydria* of *c.* 410 B.C. by the Meidias Painter. Florence: Archaeological Museum (81948).







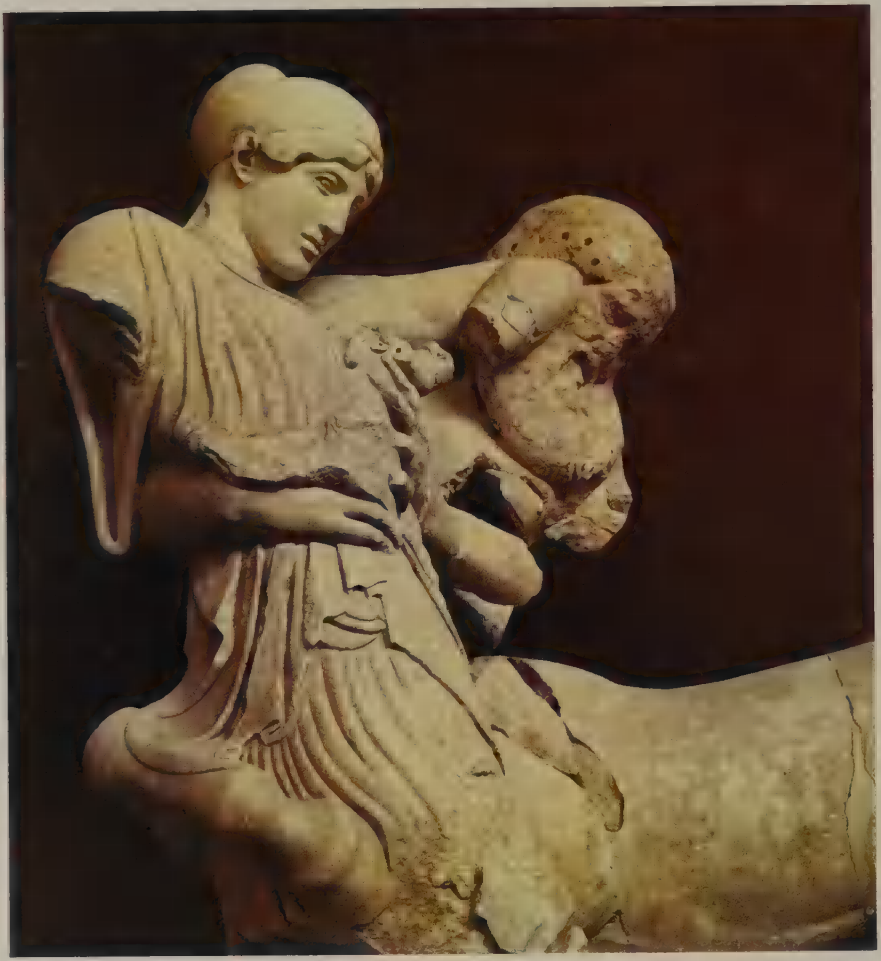
then it only becomes necessary to show him somewhat older in the interest of plausibility where he is a lover himself. Otherwise it is through appeal to a maternal instinct that he wins his way.

This does not mean that he has lost any of his power in popular imagination; but poet and philosopher have by then so worked on his character, and his mother has so far developed in cult and art, that neither play quite their original roles in Greek life. In the fifth century the outrageous Alcibiades (whom we shall meet again) could have as his shield device an Eros wielding Zeus' own weapon, a thunderbolt. With the monarchies of the Hellenistic world, an age in which mortal kings had learned from Alexander the Great that divinity was a thing that even man might covet, Aphrodite could be regarded as patron of a dynasty, and queens were identified with her as readily as local nymphs had been in earlier days. As Aphrodite/Venus, mother of Aeneas, she became a central figure in the myth history of early Rome, and as an ancestor of Julius Caesar she was patroness of the destiny of the new Roman world.

It was not only through Aphrodite and Eros that the Greeks expressed their view of love through myth. We have already met Eros' *alter ego* Himeros (Desire) and observed how he could multiply. Pothos (Yearning Love) was rendered as an Eros-like figure by the fourth-century sculptor Scopas. Peitho, the personification of Persuasion, who holds 'the secret keys to the rites of love' (Pindar), and the Charites (Graces) could also serve Aphrodite or exercise her functions, but are given no serious role in myth.

The Greeks were not unaware of the animal in human nature and recognised that in the expression of the baser elements of lust they came closest to it. The bull was a symbol of virility but it was through horse-men that artists rendered the effects of animal passions. Centaurs, mountain-ranging hunters, were shown as horses with human torsos or foreparts as early as the eighth century B.C. Their failings are wine and women, and in myth these all too human frailties give rise to their drunken attack on the women at the wedding party of the Lapith king Pirithous. The master of the Olympia pediments offers the best portrayal of this outrage upon innocence, and it seems to have served as a parable of the effect of barbaric animal behaviour in the face of what was regarded as more typically Greek and civilised. This is perhaps why it occupied such an important position on the temple of the father of the gods at his most famous sanctuary.

The sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, the *Altis* or Sacred Grove.

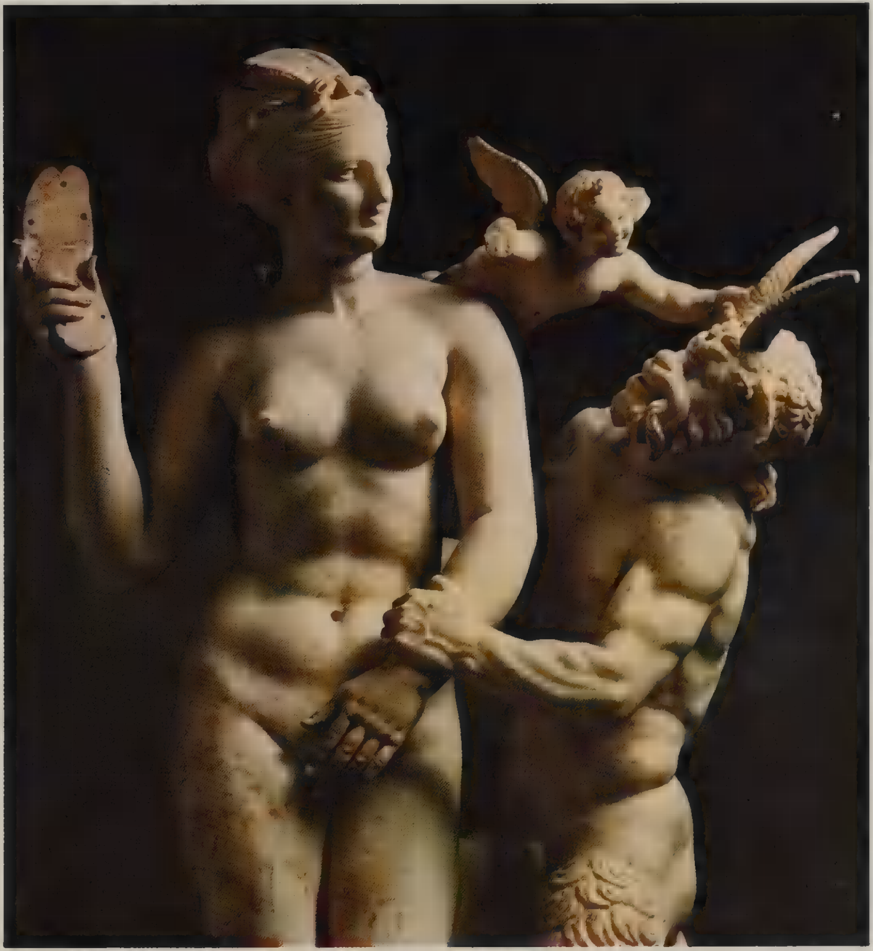


A centaur seizes a struggling girl. Marble group from the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, which showed the fight at the wedding of the Lapith king Pirithous. *c.* 460 B.C. Olympia Museum.

There are other horse-men too, the satyrs, but the animal in their physique is no more than ears, tail, and sometimes legs. Their appearance was the invention of Greek artists early in the sixth century when they are shown dancing, piping, and pursuing women, while flaunting superhuman erections. The women are soon identified as maenads – ecstatic dancers celebrating the rites of Dionysos, the god of wine. The satyrs are of his company too, and in Greek art of the sixth and fifth centuries they offer a superb embodiment of human lust, heightened by wine, sanctified by the god himself. They generally play no part in myth, although it was an unwise goddess who crossed their path, or indeed the centaurs', and in Greek art both Hera and Iris suffer from their attentions.

The satyrs' association with Dionysos and their mummery give them a special place in the history of Greek theatre, to which we shall return. Otherwise, their conduct is best explained in human terms, an open expression of what, perhaps, the artist and his fellows sought in unbridled sensuality but never quite attained. Their virility is unquenchable. They love the pursuit, the sight and touch of their quarry, whatever feeds the human imagination, rather than the consummation. They are untiring and neither sexual release (they are hardy masturbators) nor wine bring any lassitude or hangover to disturb their dance and music-making. Like the centaurs they are interested in women, not men. For portrayal of homosexual behaviour the Greeks seemed not to need to

Pan attacks Aphrodite who threatens him with a sandal while Eros pulls at his horn. Marble group from Delos of the first century B.C. Athens: National Museum (3335). H. 1.32 m



turn to subhuman surrogates. And if the satyrs are occasionally bestial, seduced by Dionysos' mule, this is no more than a concession to their part-animal physique. Their life is idealised, permissive, a man-made fantasy world untroubled by deeper religious purposes of fertility or initiation, a precursor of the fantasy world promised and chronicled by the publishers of modern magazines for men.

Another divine man-animal had a more serious role in Greek myth and religion – Pan, the goat-god, whose animal nature was more openly admitted in the way he was portrayed. He was patron and protector of flocks, guardian of the siesta hour, but with his panic shriek able to strike terror in the hearts of men or beasts. His loves were bestial or, when the quarry was nymph or goddess, generally unrequited. Syrinx escaped to turn into the reed from which he made his pipes, but shepherd boys were at his mercy too. He inspired both fear and affection, and was a far more real figure than the satyrs to the Greeks. His erotic interests made him a natural companion for Aphrodite and Eros, and he is seen at play with them, wrestling with Eros, even contemplating assault upon his mother in the famous marble group from Delos, where neither Aphrodite's raised sandal nor Eros seem to be offering positive discouragement.

Pan was said to be a child of Hermes, the god of wayfarers and shepherds.

Aphrodite had lain with Hermes, and their child, Hermaphroditus, was a strange and sophisticated invention of Late Classicism. Her union with Dionysos produced Priapus, another grossly phallic fertility god, much favoured by Hellenistic Greece. The Hermaphrodite figure reminds us of the Greeks' curiosity about themselves, and he/she was regarded and even worshipped less as a physiological freak than as an embodiment of bisexuality. Aspects of this, too, they could explore through myth. Tiresias wounded two coupling snakes as he separated them, and for this was turned into a woman. He was returned to male form later by a similar episode, and when Zeus argued with Hera about which sex won the greater pleasure from making love, he was called in to help. 'Nine times better for women,' he declared, for which betrayal Hera struck him blind and Zeus gave him the gifts of prophecy and long life.

It is to other myths, and not least to Zeus, that we can turn for other views on love. The gods and heroes do not set the example; they mirror, explain and sometimes even compensate for the attitudes and fantasies of those who invented them, and worshipped them. Through their myths the Greeks were studying themselves, as they were or as they wished to be, as much as they were demonstrating divine providence or vengeance.

Zeus' amours were legion, and he could set an example for homosexual love, too, in his seduction of the boy Ganymede, whom he brought to Olympus to serve as cup-bearer, and who gave his name to others who share his service

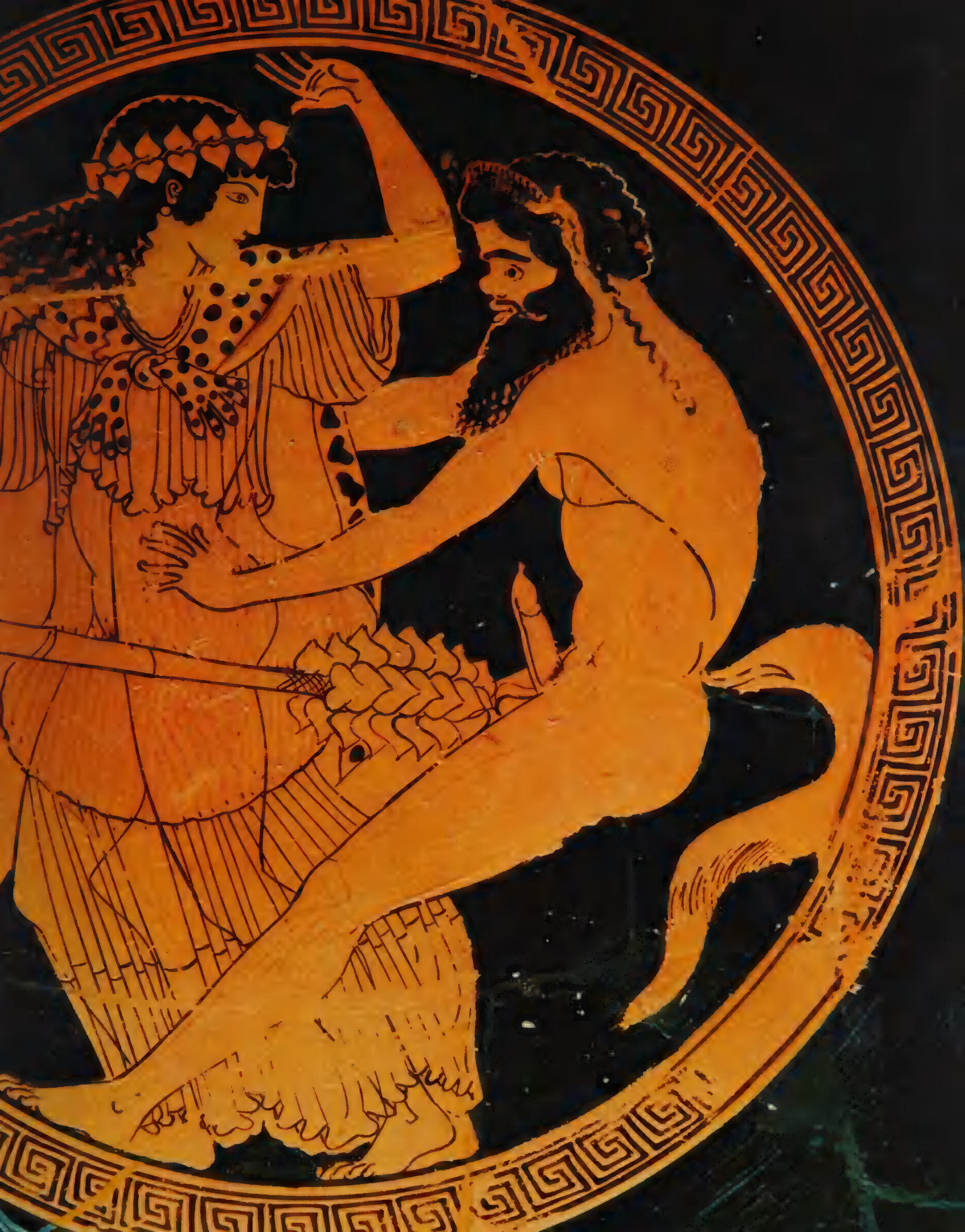
Opposite page and below: Two views of the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia. The columns in the view below are of the temple of Hera.

(catamite). The taking of Ganymede was no shameful thing and was celebrated in Zeus' own sanctuary by a fine clay group of the Early Classical period. When Zeus lay with Alcmena to beget the mighty Herakles he tripled the length of the night to accommodate such a heroic conception, and Herakles matched his father in his loves for women or boys, so much so that the tale could be told of how he deflowered fifty girls in one night.

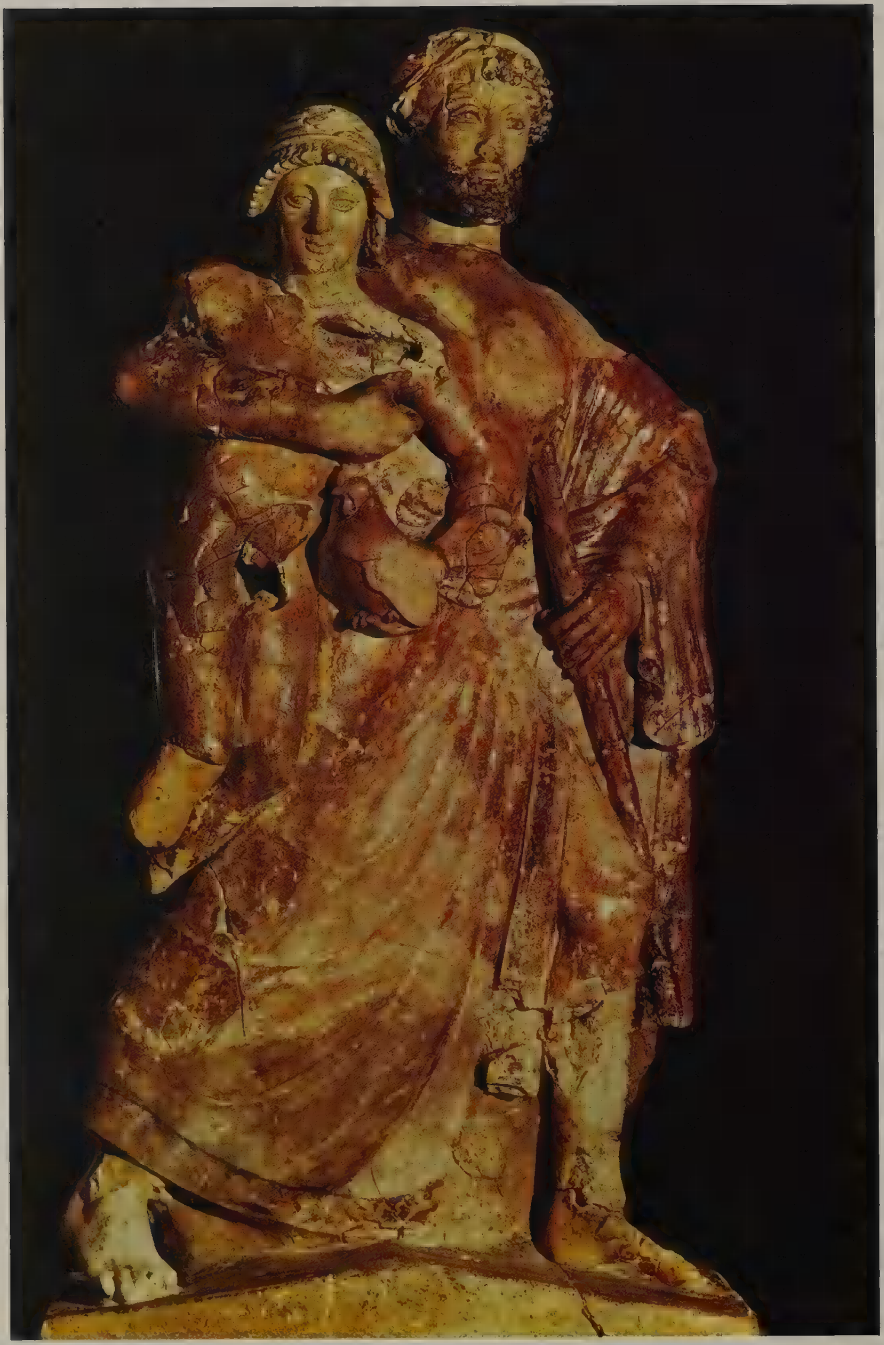
These were sexual exploits which no ordinary mortal could rival, or perhaps wish to rival, but the myths had other and more moral lessons: the success story of mortal Peleus who could win a goddess for his bride, although she had been sought by Zeus and Poseidon; the chivalrous motif we meet in later ages of the king's beautiful daughter Andromeda, chained to be devoured by a dragon, rescued by a hero-knight Perseus; the courageous motif of Leander nightly swimming the Hellespont to lie with Hero; the cad and rake, Theseus, who jilts poor Ariadne left sleeping on Naxos, who steals Helen, only nine years old, intending to save her until she was old enough, and who then abets Pirithous' attempt on the Queen of Hades herself. There were cautionary tales for the whole range of erotic behaviour, even bestiality. Pasiphae fell in love with a bull and had Daedalus devise for her a hollow cow in which to receive it (a device reinvented by the modern artificial inseminationist), or Leda with the Zeus swan, which seems a more refined cousin of the phallus bird which haunts Archaic and Classical Greek art. Even the transvestite can find his model: Achilles dressed and treated as a girl to elude the Greeks who would take him to Troy; Herakles enslaved to Queen Omphale and exchanging his club and lionskin for her dress and distaff.

A more sublime and deliberate use of such stories is made by the fifth-century dramatists who handle themes of love which were perhaps simple enough in their original form, but which in their hands become heart-searching expressions of human problems, virtues and weaknesses. A number of these deal with themes of recurrent interest in Western literature. The motive of the older woman who falls passionately in love with a young man, often related to her by marriage, appears in various Greek myths, and receives its most dramatic treatment in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Phaedra conceives a passion for her stepson having seen him naked and seeks his love. He repudiates her in horror so she alleges that he assaulted her, and Theseus, believing her, curses his son and brings him to his death. Aphrodite herself speaks the prologue and gives the warning: 'All who dwell within the bounds of Ocean and Atlas and see the light of the sun, I grant them favour if they honour my power, but I destroy those whose thoughts towards me are intemperate.'

A satyr attacks a maenad, who defends herself with her thyrsus. Athenian red-figure cup of *c.* 480 B.C. by Makron. Munich: Antikensammlungen (2654).



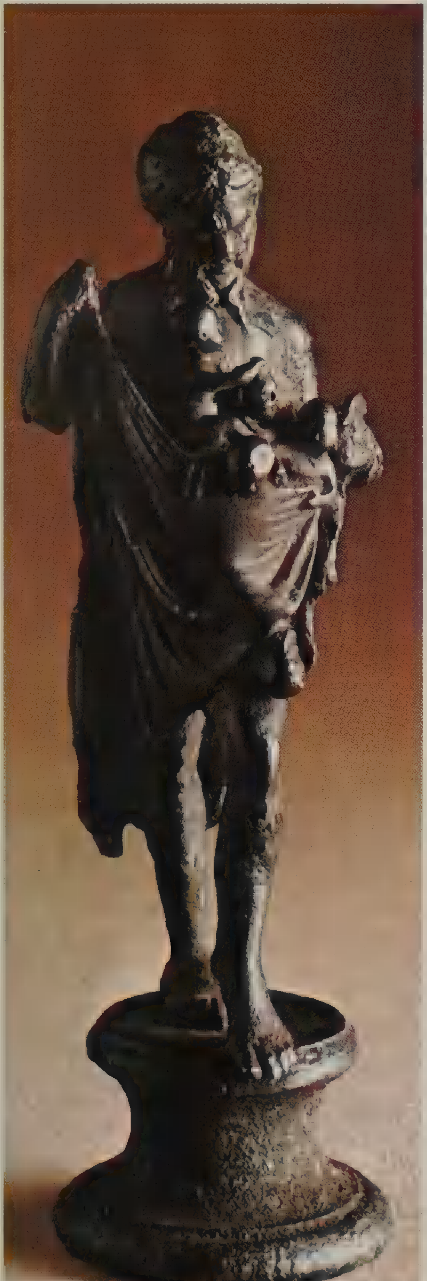
The similar and more dire situation in the story of Oedipus, who is unwittingly brought to kill his father, marry his mother and have children by her, has become a classic parable for modern psychology. In the hands of Sophocles it is a moving and terrible study of man's impotence in the face of the type of innocent coincidence or accident that, so horrible in its outcome, can only be ascribed to the malice of the gods.

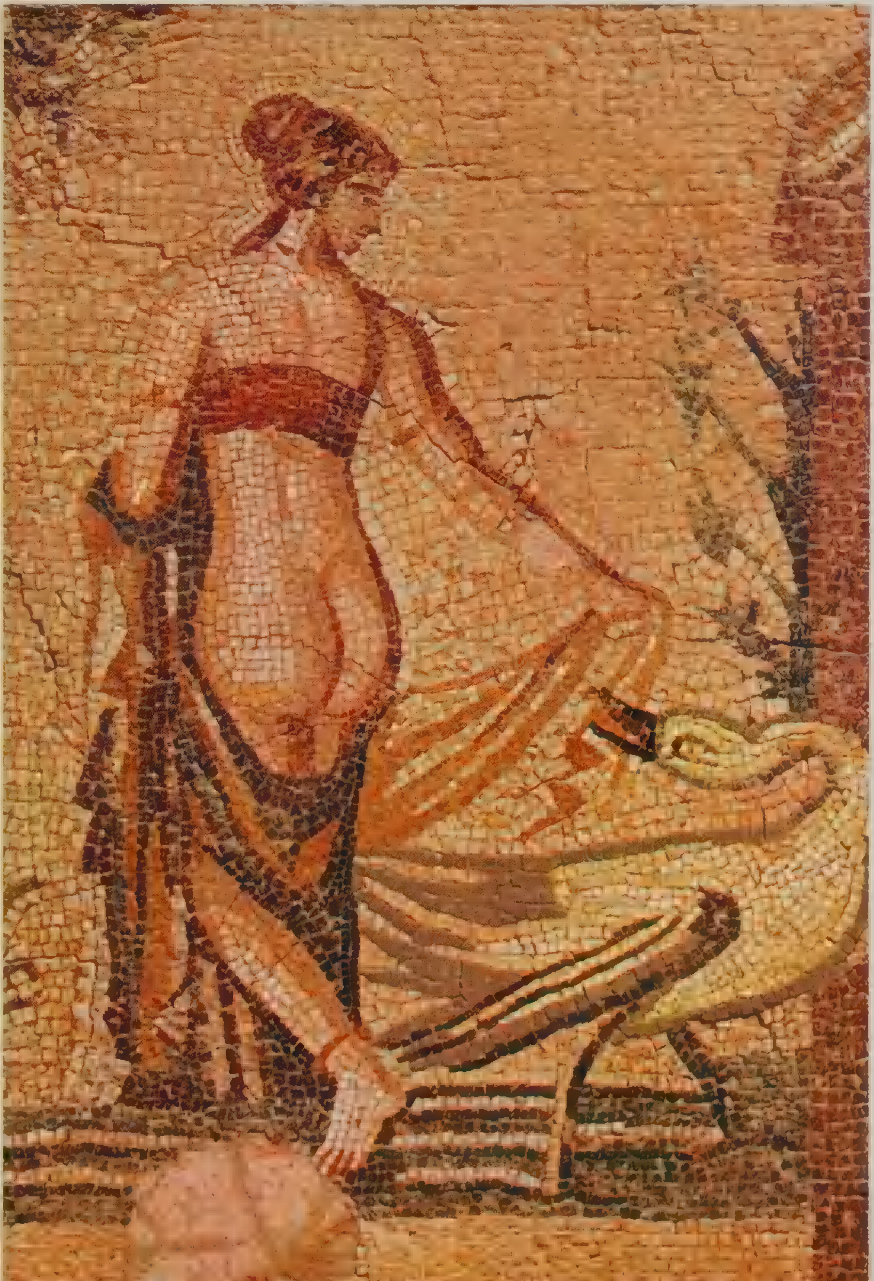


Clay group of Zeus carrying off Ganymede who clutches a cock (love-gift). Found at Olympia. c. 470 B.C. Olympia Museum. H. 1.10 m

Left: Priapus, the phallic deity, holding four children in his cloak. Bronze figure, Hellenistic. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts (08.32p). H. 0.08 m
Right: Aphrodite or Leda with her swan. Mosaic floor from a Roman house at Old Paphos in Cyprus, near the sanctuary of Aphrodite. Third century A.D.

There are more touching and, in their way, ennobling themes of love in other plays, the best probably those dealing with marital love which, in its constancy, bids to challenge death. Euripides writes of one such situation: Alcestis offers her life for her husband's and is saved from death only by the timely intervention of Herakles. This is an interesting example of the way the poet turns the story to his need, since in other versions her sacrifice is to





appease the spirit of her father whom she had helped to kill. There is a comparable tale, not in any extant play, in which it is the husband's love which is tested and proved, but which fails through its own intensity. Eurydice dies, but Orpheus charms Hades with his music and she is allowed to follow him up to life again provided he does not turn back to look at her on the way. His love is too strong for such restraint, he turns and loses her for ever.

Page 36: The cliff-edge to the site at Eryx.

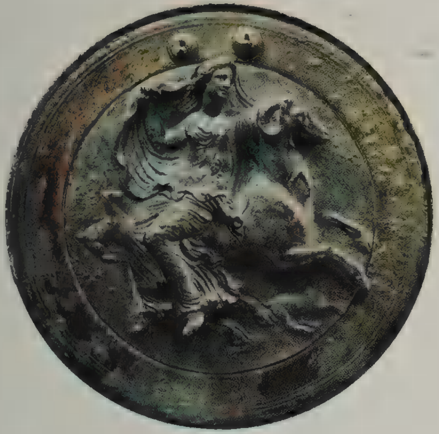
There was bawdry, too, in the stage presentation of myth, and here we meet again the satyr. In the early sixth century mortal entertainers – we call them komasts – danced often with naked women, and, as we see from many Greek vases, the dance could be lascivious and culminate in a fine display of sexual gymnastics. About the middle of the century the komasts seem to start to impersonate satyrs, both in life and in the artists' depiction of myth. From these satyr dances develop the satyr plays of fifth-century Athens, often bawdy parodies of more dignified mythological occasions, with a troop of satyrs playing a major if unconventional part in the action. We see them on many vases, men wearing a satyr mask and shaggy loincloth to which are fastened the satyr's horsy tail and his no less distinctive and superhuman erect phallus. The satyr plays were staged in the same performances with the great tragedies, written by the same poets, and in one day an Athenian citizen (though not his wife) might be moved to tears of compassion over the heroic or divine dilemmas of an Alcestis or Oedipus, and rock with laughter at some erotic parody of an equally noble theme: a thorough exercise if not purge of the emotions. Yet all were the adjunct of an act of worship, performed at a festival in honour of the god Dionysos and in sight of his temple.

It is time to turn to other acts of worship, more serious than the Dionysiac plays, but devoted still to love in one form or another. Greek myths are about the gods and heroes they worshipped, and often cult and story are closely related, but religion and worship were more serious matters for the Greek of Classical Athens than the contrived stories spun for him by artists, poets and playwrights, however poignant or witty they might be.

Although Aphrodite was an Olympian deity her worship and sacrifice to her did not exactly match those for the other Olympians. The darker, fertility aspect of her cult required other acts, more in keeping with those performed for the chthonic heroes, and although both Aphrodite and Eros have cult images, some of them installed in temples in the Late Classical period, neither are known for major temples of the type well familiar on many sites for many other gods, and their sanctuaries are often smaller, more discreet, hidden from view even in caves, as befitted the mysterious and private nature of their power and its expression.

There were several cults of Aphrodite in Athens. One, on the north slopes of the Acropolis, she shared with Eros. The niches for offerings cut in the rock are still clearly visible there, and offerings of clay figures and vases were excavated near by. This was the famous shrine of Aphrodite 'in the gardens' for which Alcamenes, pupil of Phidias, made a statue. Phidias himself made a statue for another Aphrodite, called Ourania, in a shrine beyond the Agora, and an Aphrodite Pandemos was worshipped probably near the entrance to the Acropolis itself. Philosophers made play with the opposition of Aphrodite in these two epithets, Pandemos and Ourania, seeing them personify lustful and vulgar love and the heavenly love in which the soul aspires to knowledge of reality. In fact Pandemos probably reflected the universality of Aphrodite's cult in Attica, and Ourania her birth from Ouranos or Heaven. But there were

Eryx (Erice) in Western Sicily, site of a famous sanctuary of Aphrodite, perhaps originally a Phoenician foundation.



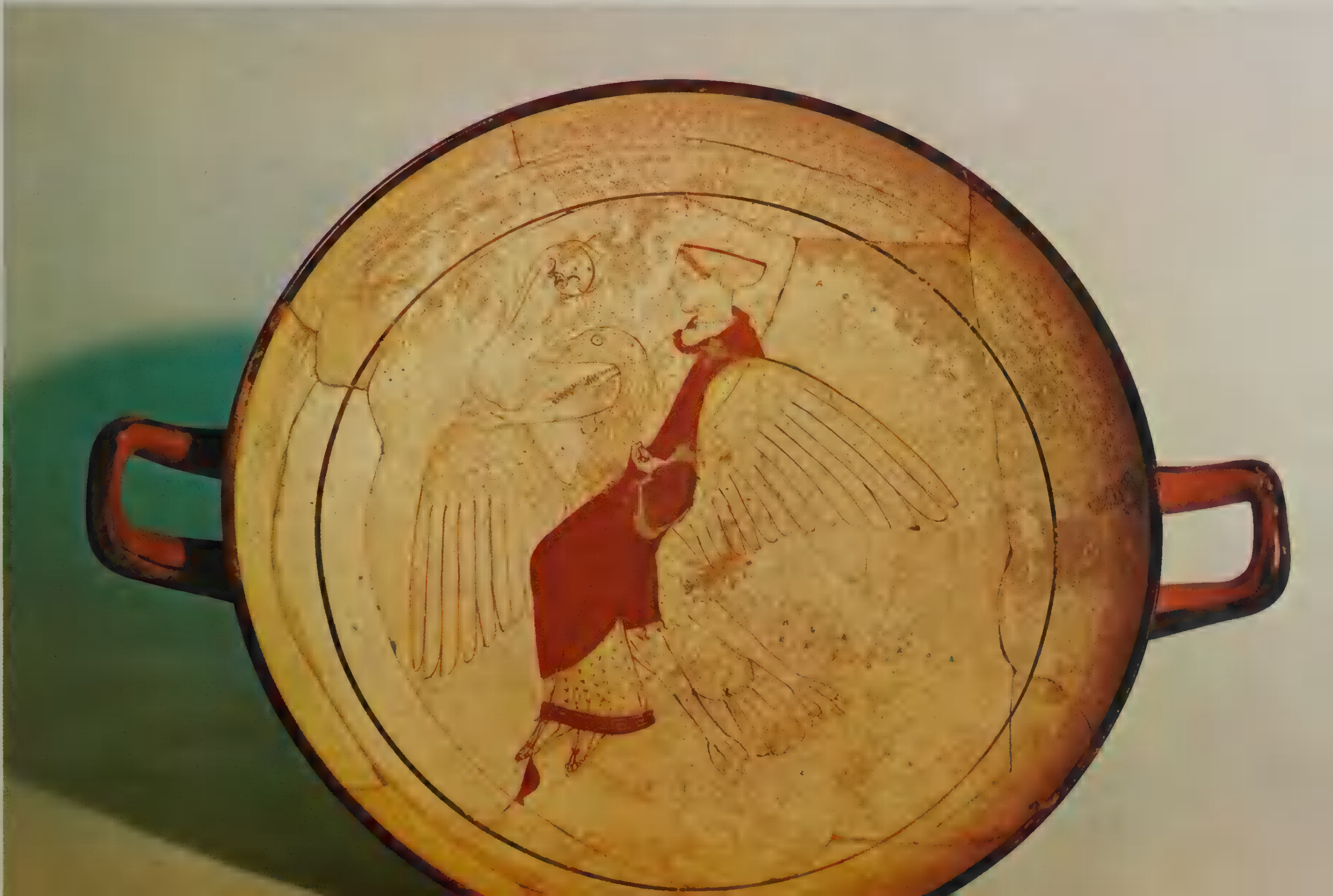
Above: Aphrodite rides a goat. Bronze mirror cover from Praeneste. *c.* 375 B.C. Paris: Louvre (1707). W. 0.144 m

Below: Aphrodite rides a goose. Athenian white-ground cup. *c.* 460 B.C. by the Pistoxenos Painter. London: British Museum (D 2).

other epithets the goddess enjoyed which remind us of her diverse origins and functions: Epitragia (goat-riding), Pontia (for seafarers), Epitymbia (of the grave – chthonic, fertility). She was even taken as an armed goddess in parts of Greece, as in Sparta and Cythera.

The primitive aspect of these cults of love deities is shown by the most revered of the shrines of Eros, where the god was worshipped as a crude stone block or baetyl, perhaps phallic, until a statue was made for him by Praxiteles in the fourth century. Thespiae, on the flanks of Helicon, mountain of the Muses, was in Boeotia, the home of the poet Hesiod whose primeval Eros we have remarked already. The block image seems an Eastern motif, and we might relate it to features of Aphrodite's famous sanctuary at Paphos in Cyprus, her reputed birthplace, where the image of the goddess was a conical stone, which is prominent in representations of the shrine in later art.

Yet another Eastern aspect of the worship of Aphrodite in Greece is temple prostitution. In the East this might have developed from the ritual deflowering of virgins before marriage. Herodotus describes the practice of the cult in Babylon, where every woman had for a while to live as a temple prostitute and serve any man. He regarded it as shameful, but adds that it was also practised in Cyprus, and we know that there were prostitutes attached to the temple of Aphrodite which stood on Acrocorinth, the citadel of Corinth. The poet Pindar finds it possible to excuse these 'hospitable maidens, servants of Peitho [Persuasion] in rich Corinth. Aphrodite has permitted you blamelessly to pluck



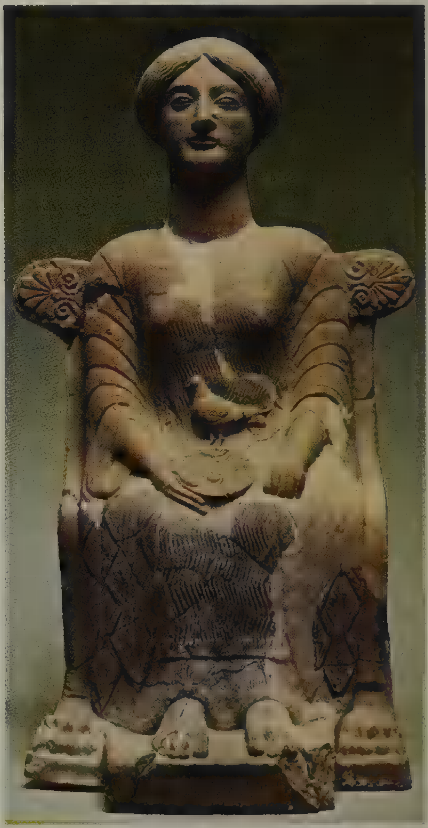
the fruit of delicate blossom on splendid couches. Under constraint all is fair . . .'. And at Locri in South Italy, where Aphrodite was an important goddess in the city, the citizens once vowed to prostitute their virgin daughters to her in return for help in war. The vow was never fulfilled but a later tyrant used it as an excuse to assemble the women of Locri and then rob them of their clothes and jewellery!

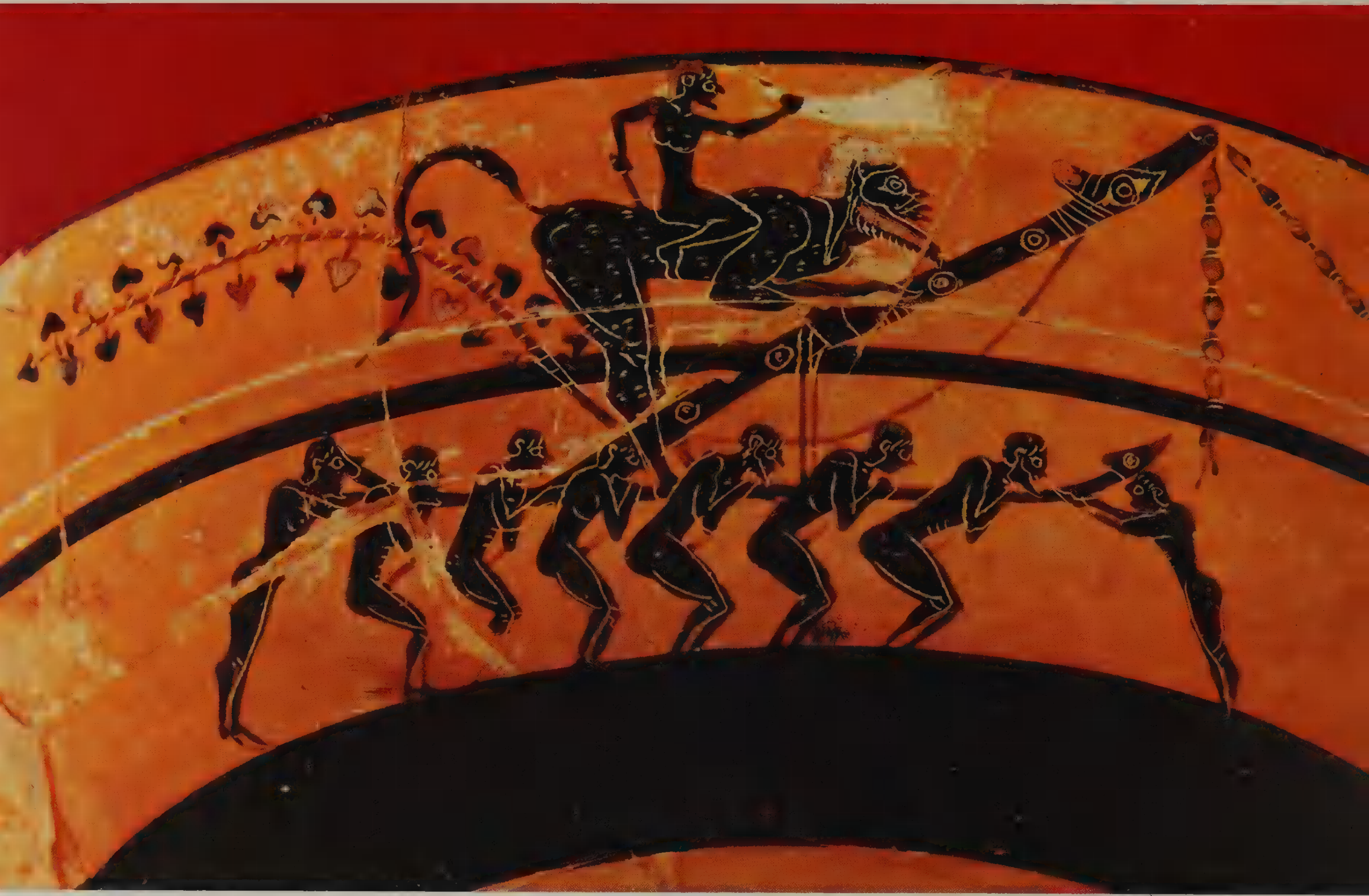
Eroticism in religion was by no means confined to the cults of Aphrodite and Eros. We have seen how aggressively sexual the satyrs' behaviour could be in the service of Dionysos, and the men impersonating satyrs, like the satyr-players of the stage, were no less blatant. In Athens the ritual marriage of the priest of Dionysos, impersonating the god, and his consort Basilinna was enacted at one of the major city festivals. In the Attic countryside more overtly sexual processions for the god could be seen, including massive phalli carried through the streets and fields like carnival floats. In the comedies performed for Dionysos in fifth-century Athens – we think first of those by Aristophanes – there was a degree of bawdy comment on recognisable contemporary figures

Opposite page: The hall of the Mysteries (*Telesterion*) at Eleusis in Attica.

Left: View of the ruins at Locri, where there were important sanctuaries of both Persephone and Aphrodite.

Below: The goddess Persephone enthroned. Clay figure from Locri. Mid fifth century B.C. Reggio di Calabria: National Museum.



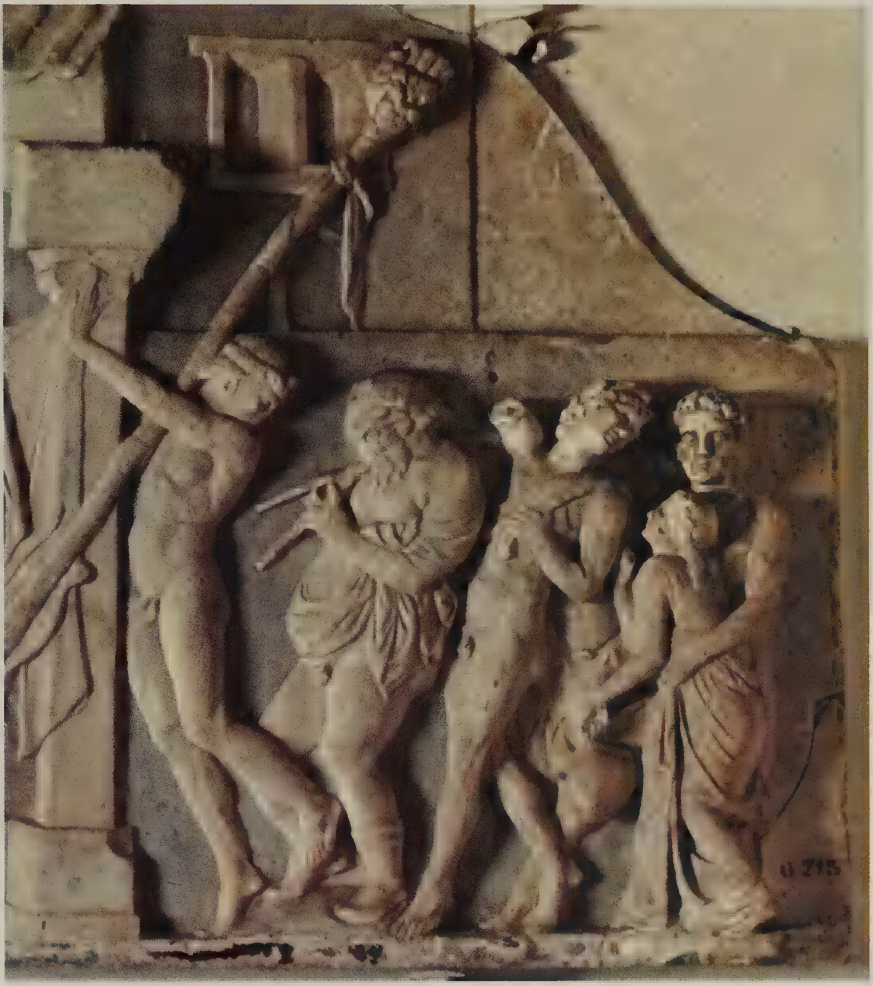


that would be barely tolerable even today. And the phallus worn so proudly by satyrs in the service of Dionysos and on his stage could serve also as a monument to success in the theatre.

The Eleusinian mysteries promised initiates a secure afterlife, and were based on simple fertility rites of resurrection. The mysteries themselves were probably a ritual display of models of sexual organs and acts, cloaking with secrecy common rites in which human love-making may have served to promote the fertility of crops. For other Athenian festivals we see women planting phalli like seedlings. This frank expression of the erotic in religion was not confined to the ritual of major festivals. Every street corner at Athens had its wayside shrine to Hermes, marked by a herm – a pillar topped by the god's head with erect genitals carved on the front, which you might touch for good luck in passing. At the end of the fifth century, with Athens on the eve of her great expedition to Sicily, the young Alcibiades and his companions shocked the citizens by roaming the streets, lopping the herms and parodying the mysteries – and especially, we may be sure, the sexual elements in them. Nothing could have appeared unluckier to a superstitious people set on a major enterprise. There were herms in the countryside too, or figures of Priapus, a

A monster phallus, supported by the figure of a satyr, carried in a rustic procession worshipping Dionysos. Athenian black-figure cup. *c.* 560 B.C. Florence: National Museum (3897).

Dionysiac procession from a marble relief which showed the god Dionysos visiting the mortal Icarius. Roman copy of a Hellenistic Greek original. Naples: National Museum (6713).



grossly phallic goblin well loved by Rome, whose goggle eyes encourage Pan in his pursuit of a boy on the famous Boston vase.

'A superstitious people' – our view of ancient Greece through its literature, philosophy and art is a partial one and can easily blind us to the irrational and superstitious in Greek culture and life. There are copious references to more popular religious practices in Greece, practices which we would not hesitate to declare magic in other ages. Love-charms, aphrodisiacs, curses to promote passion or to avenge unrequited lust were the stock-in-trade of the specialist vendor at markets and fairs, and there were many country precepts for the lover, most fully documented by Roman writers. One love-charm can be seen in the hands of Eros in Classical art. The wryneck bird (*iunx*) twists its colourful head in courting, and fastened to a spinning wheel serves as a charm. A simple wheel, spun to and fro on a double thread stretched between the hands, is the model *iunx* charm, and remains today not an uncommon toy for children. The genitals themselves have magic power especially against the evil eye. This is why, in the Eleusinian procession, there was a point at which women hurled obscene abuse at the passers-by and exposed themselves to avert some threatening evil; this was explained by the rationalising Greeks as commemorating Baubo who entertained baby Iacchus with such a display. And this is why there are so many phallic amulets to be found and why the phallus is prominently displayed, carved on house walls no less in Greek Delos than in Roman Pompeii. It is likely that much of the sexual display in Greek art is to be explained in this way and that, for instance, the cups shaped like genitals or with phallus spouts were not simply erotic playthings.

Pages 44–5:
Temple ruins at Selinus.

We learn so much of ancient Greece at second hand, through an art and literature which often had a comparatively narrow purpose and appeal, that the way to a fuller understanding of the ordinary Greek's view of love and love-life is not easy. Having looked at how his view of the erotic seems to be mirrored in myth and religion, we have to turn to the slighter, and sometimes equally biased evidence for his own life and behaviour. Fortunately the poets express unambiguously the emotions which are classless and timeless. Fortunately the vase painters were more often simple observers of the contemporary scene than self-conscious 'artists' in the modern sense. And the Greeks were litigious and literate enough to leave us sufficient evidence about how they sought to regulate their lives.

Our guide through this evidence might be an imaginary Greek – Pamphilos we shall call him – whom we need tie to no particular place or time, although we shall recognise him most readily in fifth-century Athens, and take him to be of good family.

As an adolescent his view of the matters which concern us here have been formed by his family and such schooling as he receives with others of his class – a proper attitude to the conventions of religion and behaviour tempered by his observation of how readily they might be adjusted in practice. His private view of sex might be very different from that of his counterpart today. He may be relatively isolated from the exciting company of girls of his own class and yet more so from any more liberal older women. At least he can seek physical relief in private without the burden of guilt or threat of ill health imposed by Western society on its young up to recent years.

Most of his time he spends in the company of his own sex, boys and men. At the *palaestra* (exercise ground) he strips naked. He may tie up his foreskin to hide its ugly (to Greeks) head, and after athletics he rubs over his body with oil, then scrapes it down before dressing to return home, a slave boy carrying his oil bottle, sponge and scraper (*strigil*).

The male body was much admired, by artists too who through their studies of the pattern of male, not female, anatomy, achieved the balanced realism which we admire in Classical sculpture. At the *palaestra* the admiration would not have been purely artistic, but this served as an important meeting place for all ages and there was no particular shame in forming an attachment to an older man. In the upper classes of Athenian society this was commonplace, and the admiration, advice and encouragement of a senior in such relationships did not appear necessarily harmful. Indeed it might even appear advantageous and inspiring.

Achilles and Patroclus may not have been lovers in Homer, but the fifth-century poet Aeschylus has Achilles sighing over the beauty of dead Patroclus' thighs. In late sixth-century Athens the tyrant-slayers, later heroised, were inspired by love.

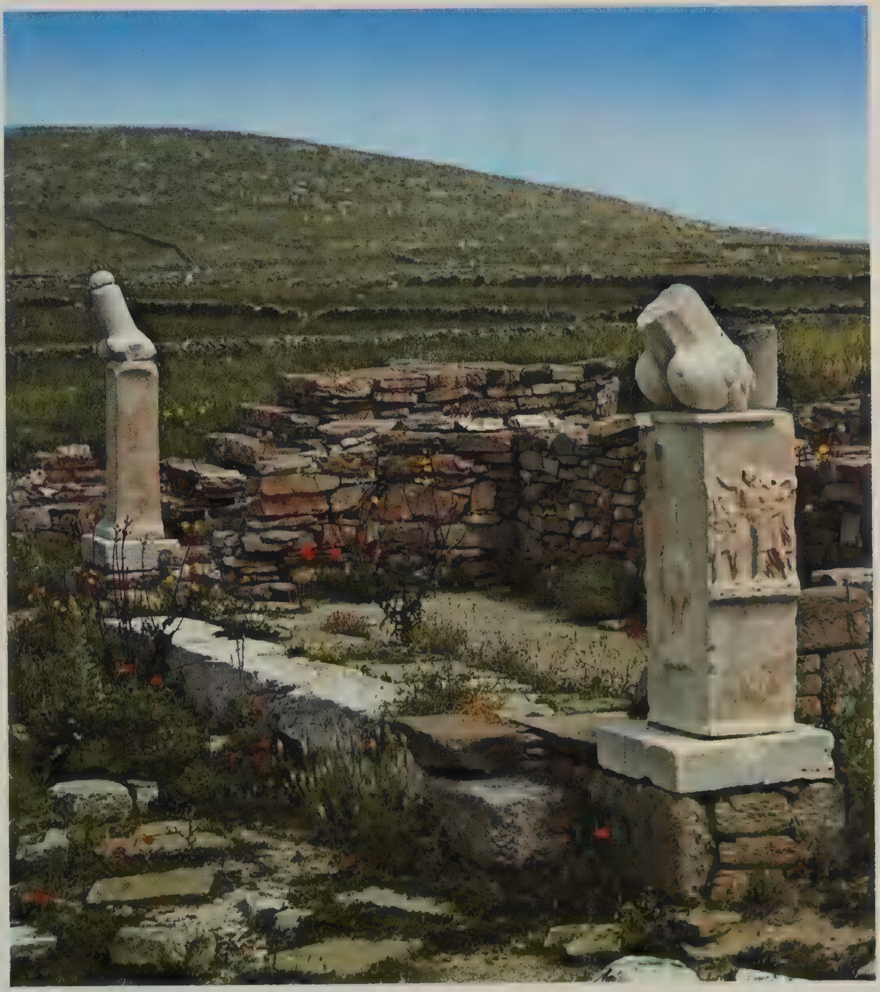
The precepts of an older man could give a model of loyalty and courage. In Sparta's dour society this formed an important element in fostering the unity of

The site of Selinus on the south coast of Sicily.

the warrior citizens, and later the Sacred Band of Thebes, a crack regiment of foot-soldiers, relied for its cohesion on the amorous associations of its members.

Our young Pamphilos finds nothing shameful in such an association with an older man. He can even find it sanctioned by the philosophers. Socrates, through Plato, can make homosexual love, a divine madness, the main inspiration for the soul in its flight towards contemplation of the ideal forms. Through it the lover and the loved can lead each other in a common quest for truth. This is the message of Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. To Pamphilos this was, perhaps, all very well, and it has certainly suited modern apologists for the apparent – illusory – Greek obsession with homosexuality. But Socrates was eventually condemned and executed for corrupting the youth of Athens, and however sublime the motives or educational the effect, there could be no doubt that the expression of such love was likely to prove physical in most cases.

In Greek art the homosexual act had been canonised into an iconographic pattern far sooner than the heterosexual, with the courtship fondling and love-gifts of a cock or hare, and it is clear that Pamphilos and his friends live in a society where, for a short spell in their lives, such liaisons with an older man are commonplace, if not encouraged. But it is commonplace only in a restricted



Opposite page and right: Theatral monuments on the island of Delos in the form of erect phalli on relief-decorated bases. Third century B.C.

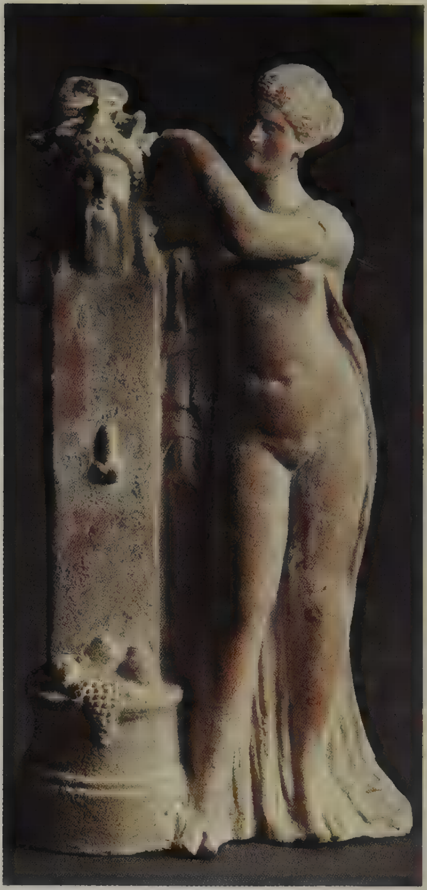
class or in the special circumstances of militarist communities. The philosophers are naïve enough to approve homosexual love for its ennobling qualities, yet to condemn the physical act. It is clear, however, that it was generally condemned, or ridiculed, at other levels of society. Seduction and rape were severely punishable by law although in some communities, in Sparta and Crete, a convention, almost a ritual, might be observed in regulating these relationships.

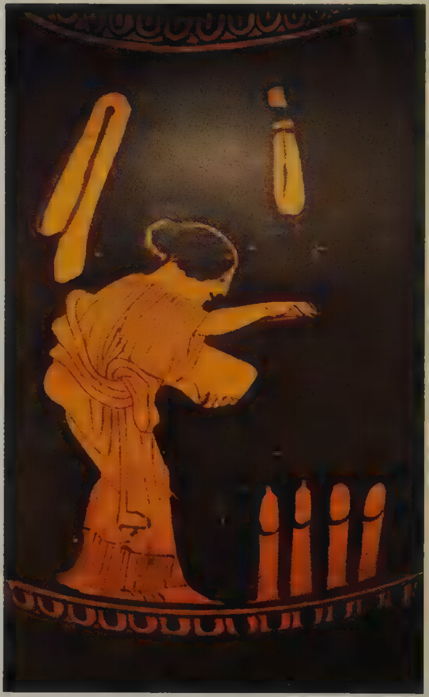
Pamphilos has survived the attachments of the *palaestra* and military service and looks forward now to his life as a citizen. Will he marry? He would be unwise not to, since in many Greek cities celibacy was derided, fined after a certain age and entailed some loss of civil rights. Will he marry for love? Probably not. A wedding will be arranged by the family, a formal betrothal with a dowry contract, and the ceremony hardly more than the formal installation of the bride in her new home. Pamphilos' humbler fellow citizens, however, might well have been able to indulge a love-match. Homer states the model with Penelope and Odysseus, and when Odysseus meets Nausicaa and, for a change, has home on his mind, he prays:

> May the gods grant you all your heart's desire,
> A home, a husband, the sweet harmony
> All seek. For there is naught more constant fair
> Than man and wife who share their hopes and hearth
> Confounding envy and delighting friends.

The wish must have been realised in many a Greek marriage, if rarely in the class about which we have learned most. Pamphilos will probably not marry until he is over thirty and then his bride could be half his age, a virgin in her teens. But sex is fun, Pamphilos knows that, and everything that we can still see or read of ancient Greece makes it clear that the Greeks, more than most ancient peoples, appreciated the zest, humour and variety of making love. It has to be before or outside marriage that Pamphilos finds his enjoyment of the other sex.

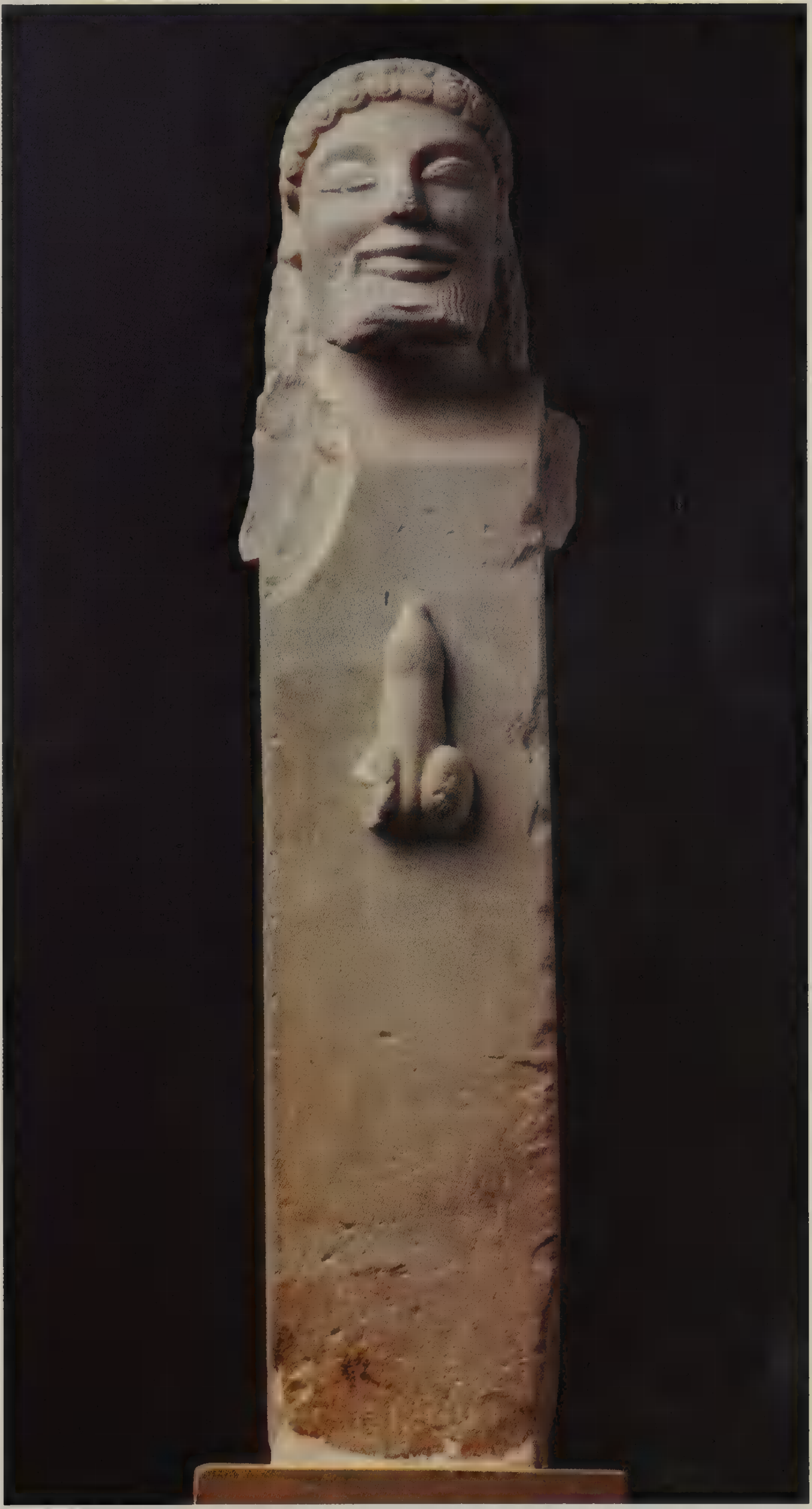
Adultery could be punished by death, but very rarely was, and in some ways it was regarded more as a public concern which could complicate questions of legitimacy and inheritance than a private injury. The oldest profession in the world is, however, at his service. Probably not for him the common whores who display themselves naked or nearly so, in the town brothels. There are other women who sell their favours, better educated, witty, the ancient counterpart to the modern conception of the geishas of Japan. These enjoyed the more delicate title of hetaera – companion. The celebrated Rhodopis of Naucratis could grow rich enough to send a valuable dedication to Delphi. Leaena, companion of one of the tyrant-slayers, was said to have bitten out her tongue rather than betray him and to have been honoured by a monument. The relationship could be long lived. Aspasia was Pericles' mistress from after he divorced his wife until his death. She had come from Miletus to teach eloquence, and was credited with considerable political influence in Athens, a reputation not uncommon in other periods for the favourites of leading statesmen. Most of these women came from other areas of Greece – the expensive Lais at Corinth came from Sicily. Their 'stage' names are sometimes amusing: Leaena, 'lioness', because in Greek art the creature was often shown crouching, bottom in air – a favourite posture; or Clepsydra, 'water-clock', for the way she measured her time for her clients. Their wit was the source of many an anecdote and literary essay.





Opposite page: above: Aphrodite or a woman crowns a herm of Dionysos. Clay group from Myrina. Late second century B.C. London: British Museum (C 528). H. 0.225 m

Below: A woman 'plants' model phalli, probably for the Haloa festival. Detail of an Athenian red-figure *pelike* of *c.* 430–420 B.C. by the Hasselmann Painter. London: British Museum (E 819).



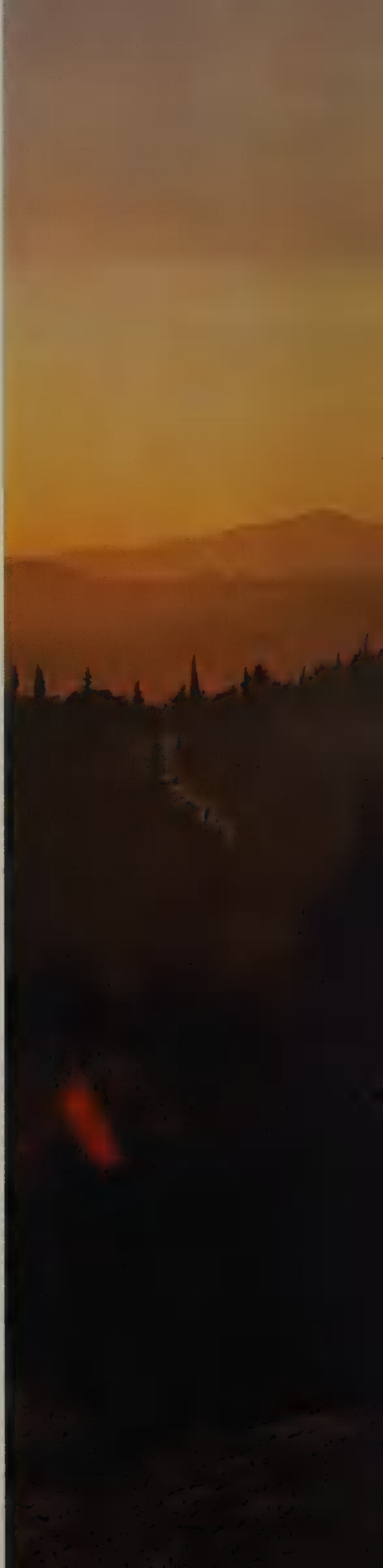
Right: A marble herm from Siphnos: a pillar with a head of Hermes and erect genitals. *c.* 520 B.C. Athens: National Museum (3728). H. 0.66 m

Pamphilos will be lucky to secure the favours of a popular hetaera, but he can find a congenial companion readily enough and the pleasure they take in each other has nothing odd about it to modern eyes. The vase scenes indicate a slight preference for love-making from behind, but this may be a matter rather of comfort and convenience than of male domination. Occasionally the man may wield a slipper, even once the girl, but ancient Greece is a poor source from which to document sadomasochism or the rarer perversions. The vase painters depict these scenes of love-making almost dispassionately, yet sometimes with wit and sympathy, though this is rarely for the benefit of the girl involved. Poets could be no less explicit and far more lyrical about the emotions, and leave us in no doubt about Greek connoisseurship in these matters. There is lyrical tenderness too. Part of a poem by Archilochus (seventh century) has recently been found on papyrus, and tells with wit and passion of a man's negotiation for, and considerate courting of, a virgin for his bride:

I took her mid the blossoming flowers;
On a soft cloak she lay,
My arm a cradle to appease
The timid fawn's dismay.
I smooth her breasts, my fingers pluck
Her body's flower laid bare;
My passion spent to touch with white
The golden maiden hair.

The one occasion on which Pamphilos might, in company, be able to indulge an appetite for wine, women and song is in the symposium. The drinking party was in some ways a very conventionalised event. Since about 600 B.C. the Greeks had reclined at feasts on high couches (*klinai*). For the party these were set against the walls of the room, with low three-legged tables beside each to carry cups and food. The guests arrive, dressed only in a cloak with a bandeau round their hair, and place their boots beneath the couch, or hang sandals on the wall, put aside their walking-sticks and mount the couches, sometimes two on one, the host on the left of the entrance, honoured guests to the right. Food first, then libations to the gods and a hymn, and the drinking begins. This could be the occasion for semi-serious conversation – in Plato's *Symposium* we have a party where the guests, including Socrates, Aristophanes, and eventually a drunken Alcibiades, who confesses his love for the philosopher, compete in speeches about Eros. The drinking itself might be serious enough. The Greeks watered their wine quite heavily and the toper usually had more difficulty with quantity than alcohol content – hence the handy basins and pots to accommodate the products of excess. The wine was served by a naked boy, carrying jug, sieve and dipper, and he was not always immune from the attentions of the guests.

If a favourite hetaera attended she might sit on the couch or a chair, but there were girls, too, to dance, play pipes and soothe the men. They could be



The Acropolis at Athens seen from the south-west.

persuaded out of their clothes and on to the couches and the vase scenes show that sometimes a symposium can become the setting for a sexual display. In most such scenes, however, the cups are not in evidence and we are probably to take them as brothel parties.

Overtly amorous behaviour between male guests sharing couches would have been ill mannered. The girls could have their own drinking parties too, and on several vases we see an all-women symposium, the ladies naked and toasting the popular young men of the day.

At the end of the sixth century the 'Left Bank' of ancient Athens was, it seems, its potters' quarter, where the artists and their girls appear to be on terms of easy familiarity with the gilded and aristocratic youth of the city. At that time a Pamphilos would be fortunate to move in this circle of talent and good living, though he might be taken aback at the apparently transvestite behaviour inspired by guests from Ionia, wearing the effeminate Lydian gowns and caps, even carrying parasols, the entourage of the poet Anacreon who spent much of his last forty years in Athens, before the Persian wars, and died there, choked by a grape pip.

To these private diversions for an alertly amorous spirit Pamphilos can add the greater sophistication of public performances of plays. We have already seen how strong the sexual element was in the dialogue and conduct of the Greek theatre. This came closest to depicting contemporary behaviour, and not always through a veil of myth, in Athens' Old Comedy, which we know from the surviving plays of Aristophanes. Play-going could be an arduous business: up to five plays on a single day, viewed from a hard wooden or marble seat with only the knees of the man behind as a back rest.

Our Pamphilos is viewing Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Only in rare modern satirical productions can we approach the licence enjoyed by the ancient playwright. Aristophanes' comment is upon the mores, the religion, literature, philosophy, politics of the day, and it is conducted in a tangle of sexual innuendo and sexual display. The costumes are crudely phallic and the fact that the actors are all men does not inhibit the scenario. The play has been written at a time when Athens was getting the worst of a protracted war. It deals with one way of enforcing peace – through the womenfolk of both sides withdrawing their sexual favours from their men until they stopped fighting. The women's union leader, Lysistrata, barely disguises in name the present priestess of Athena, and the action is on the sacred Acropolis rock, which rises behind the audience seated in the theatre of Dionysos. There is an odd mixture of sacrilege and sanctity for us in such a work, but Pamphilos accepts it naturally, laughs at the bawdy allusions to his contemporaries, most perhaps at the slapstick prurience of the scene in which a wife pretends to give way to her impatiently tumescent husband, fussing over his comfort, the mattress, the coverlet, and at the crucial moment retiring behind the picket lines to leave him in the lurch. Her name is that of the current priestess of Athena Nike and the action is at the entrance to the Acropolis where the temple of Athena Nike stands!

Opposite page and pages 54–5: The Parthenon, temple of Athena, on the Acropolis at Athens. Built in the mid fifth century B.C. to honour both the goddess and the city which had freed Greece from the Persian threat.

It is unlikely that Pamphilos can take his lady friend or his wife with him to the play, although women could attend, it seems. In the streets of Athens and in society his opportunity to appraise the opposite sex as freely as he might his own in the *palaestra* is restricted. The men might walk the streets near naked, the women not, and in Aristophanes' play the singer who rejoices at his glimpse of a dancing girl's little breast peeping through her torn tunic shows that Pamphilos is unlikely to be quite blasé about the sight of a girl's body in part or

whole. Think of the stories of goddesses or nymphs shocked at being espied naked. And it is clear that a Greek girl knew well how much more exciting the veiled or part-hidden can be. Her armoury in the sex war is a formidable one. Greek dress was basically a matter of skilful buttoning or pinning of rectangles of cloth which hang loose, sometimes clinging to the body or open along one side to show a flank or leg. A Greek might express shock at the forwardness of athletic Spartan girls showing their thighs or exercising naked with youths, and would be no less quick to appreciate a graceful buttock, and acknowledge the attraction of an Aphrodite Kallipygos (of the beautiful bottom).

There were secret weapons too, perfumes, oils, padding, the eyebrow pencil, the careful depilation or singeing of body hair. The many allusions to all this by Aristophanes and elsewhere make it very likely that we too easily misjudge the degree of licence enjoyed by free women in Classical Greece.

Not that Pamphilos' sister, of good family, has much opportunity to enjoy life. She has received little education except in domestic matters, taught to guard her tongue and her virginity until given in marriage. Once married her freedom depends upon her husband and her circle of friends. In families less in the public eye life was probably far easier. The neglected wife could even find sexual solace with the ingenious leather goods (*olisboi*) which the Milesians were so skilled in making. Some of the all-women festivals, for Aphrodite, Adonis or Dionysos, might offer opportunities for 'women talk'.

But there were women, and women. As early as the seventh century, a poet, Semonides, could reflect on this, likening their various temperaments to animals, favouring most the wife like a bee, who 'has a good reputation with all women, imbued with divine grace. Not for her sitting and talking sex with the womenfolk. Such a wife is the best and wisest that Zeus bestows on a man.' It might not always be a question of merely talking sex with other women.

The modern word for female homosexuality, Lesbianism, derives from the Greek island Lesbos, which had in antiquity a reputation for the openness of the practice, but we may be sure that it was hardly less common elsewhere, and Lesbos's priority is owed to the fame of its sixth-century poetess, Sappho. She seems to have managed an academy for young ladies where such interests might naturally flourish and were clearly neither discouraged nor frowned upon. Her songs are among the most poignant expressions of sexual love in antiquity, and are devoted to love among women. She invokes Aphrodite, 'immortal goddess of the splendid throne,' who answers her:

'Who wrongs you, Sappho? She who flies will soon
Pursue to press the kisses she denies,
Whether she will or no.' Then, goddess, come,
Deliver me from care, answer my cry
And be my ally ever.

And when a favourite girl is caught in marriage the jealous pain is intense:

He's like a god, the man who sits with you,
Who steals your voice's sweets, your witching laugh,
The sight that makes my heart leap in my breast,
That stills my lips, seizes upon my tongue,
Sears my whole body with a tingling fire,
I'm blind, my head's a drum, my limbs asweat,
I tremble, green as grass, as good as dead.

The sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia. A view of the *palaestra* – the athletic exercise ground in the form of a large courtyard with internal colonnade.

Pamphilos was a child of Classical Greece. In later days Greek society and life changed drastically. Alexander the Great opened the gates to India and to Egypt; and the cosmopolitan societies of Syria or Alexandria, in new empires whose rulers could be treated as gods, as a New Dionysos or Aphrodite, took the place of the more intimate humanism of Greece's small city-state 'democracies'. The results, for the arts and society, were a tendency towards the more florid, the contrived, and in matters of love towards the artificial and sentimental. In Alexandria, for instance, we have on the one hand the lavish Dionysiac procession of Ptolemy II with its fantastic floats: one of many – 'a four-wheeler, thirty feet by twenty-four drawn by three hundred men, with a wine press set up in it, thirty-six feet long by twenty-two and a half feet wide, full of grapes. Sixty satyrs trod them as they sang a vintage song to the pipes, supervised by Silenus' (Athenaeus). And on the other hand we find the first flowering of pastoral poetry, nostalgic idylls of countryside innocence, affected by literati in the hot-house atmosphere of Alexandria's famous library. Theocritus is a prime exponent of the genre, direct but lyrical in expression, often homosexual in content. This is the prime period too of the epigram, a sublime demonstration of the power of the Greek language to condense wit, passion, satire, in an exquisite pattern of a few lines:

> An apple for you: if you love me true,
> Take it and pay with your virginity
> But, if your thoughts are where I hope they're not,
> Still take it, and reflect how short a life
> Beauty enjoys.
>
> You grudge your maidenhead? But what's the point?
> No lover waits in Hades for you, lass.
> Pleasures of love are for the living flesh,
> Chastity down below is bones and dust.

The new mood of Hellenistic Greece is expressed in Athens by the gradual rejection of Old Comedy, the paring away of sharp political satire and pungent sex, and its replacement by New Comedy which is a comedy of manners, of stock situations acted out by stock characters – the old man, the spendthrift son, harlot, nagging wife, involved in the problems of identifying long-lost children, or ensuring that true love is requited. It is as conventional as French farce, and has left behind politics, myth, and all but the novelettish veneer of sexual love.

In the religious imagery of the gods of love the change is more subtle. A mortal empress can now be equated with Aphrodite. In art Eros is becoming a baby putto. His own love-story with Psyche of the butterfly wings is a Hellenistic creation. The girl was visited each night by her divine lover, unseen, but forfeited her happiness by desiring to set eyes on him, and suffered punishments and labours until she won him back. Her name – Soul – and the story were used early in a mystic manner to express the human soul's difficult quest for immortality, but at its simplest it was a tender idyll of adolescent love, lost and regained. The old fertility and resurrection aspects of the gods were also refashioned. Eros may now appear in a funerary setting, leaning on an upturned but burning torch, a symbolic figure far removed from the more specific sexual imagery of earlier years and other contexts.

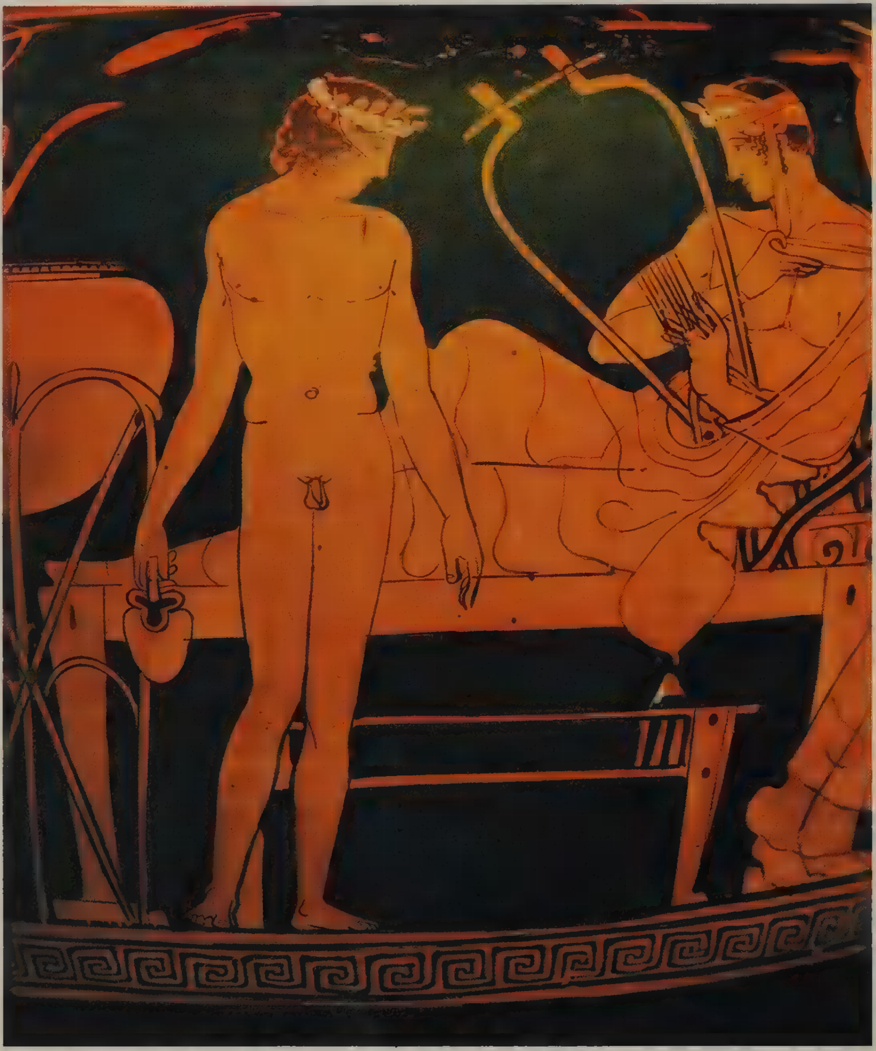
Marble *kouros* which marked the grave of Aristodikos in Attica. *c.* 500 B.C. Athens: National Museum (3938). H. 1.95 m

These stories and the new symbolism of Eros were to play an important part in Greece's cultural contribution to Roman life and religion. In Greek lands and in the Greek language it is the more romantic and pastoral moods of the Hellenistic stage and poetry that linger, to be expressed in the Greek novel, a product of the Roman era. We meet again the old plots, of lovers parted and reunited, foundlings, marital constancy and courage, and the happy ending is mandatory. But these are not always vapid romances for the barely literate. What they may lack in subtlety of plot they make up for in sincerity of description and emotion. Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, a pastoral romance, is the best known: a touching story of a young couple's fumbling discovery of sexual love, the boy instructed by an older woman (and molested by an older man), of their parting, adventures, and wedding at last after which . . . 'they lay naked together and began to embrace and kiss one another; and for all the sleep they got that night they might as well have been owls. For Daphnis did some of the things the older woman had taught him; and then for the first time Chloe realised that what had taken place on the edge of the woods had been nothing but childish play.'

The story is sexually explicit, yet fresh and innocent in its appeal despite the

Left: A view of the slopes of the sacred hill on Delos, showing the façade of the Hellenistic temple of Isis.

Opposite page: A Hellenistic house on the island of Delos with the statues of an Athenian couple, Cleopatra and Dioscurides. Mid second century B.C.



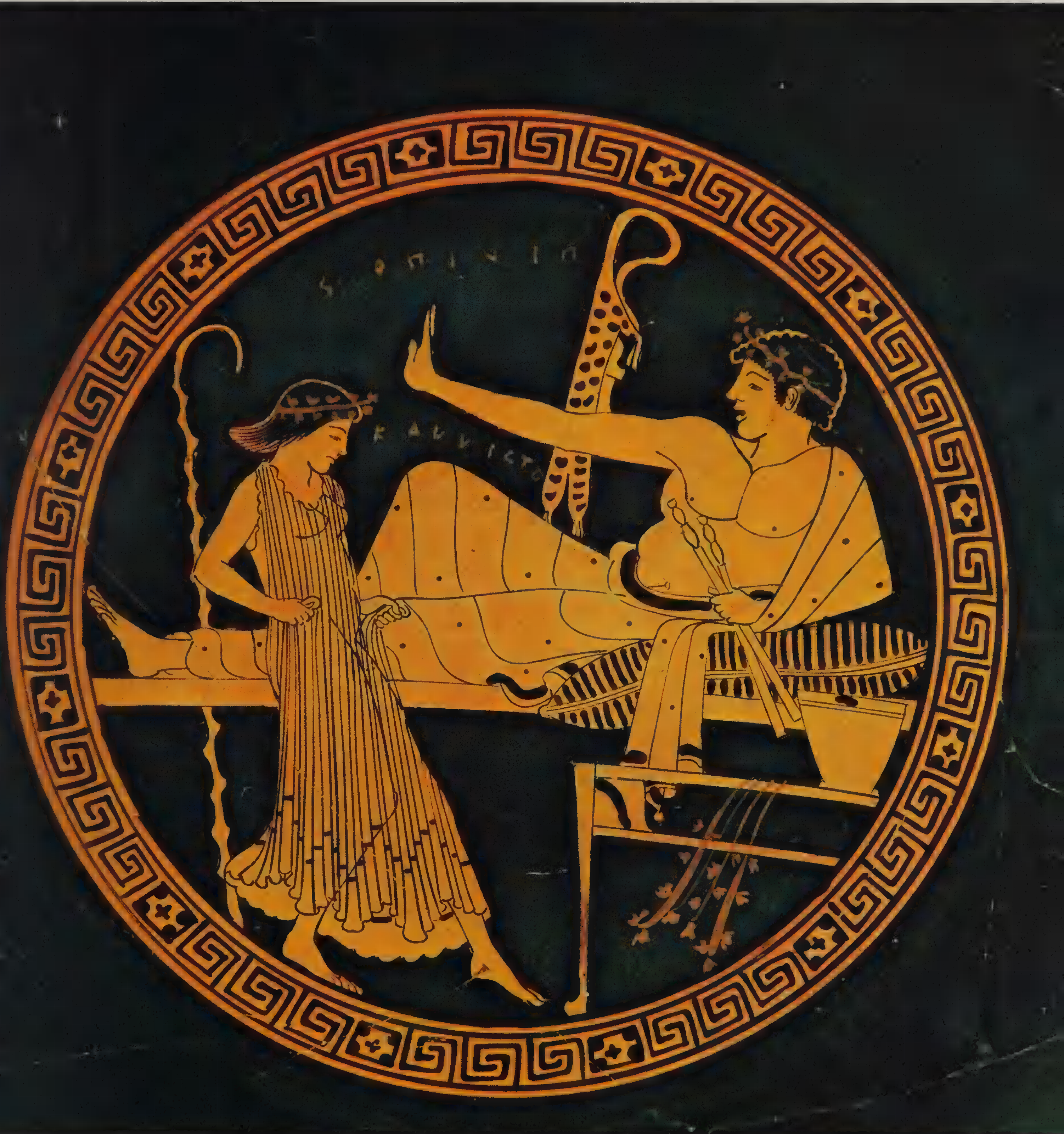
sophistication of its prose. From a world in which the old gods were being banished and in which family life was becoming more and more subordinated to the needs of the state, it comes as a welcome reminder of earlier Greek tributes, in poetry and play, to man and woman's joy in each other.

Left: A symposium. The naked cup-boy stands by the couch where a young man with a lyre (*barbiton*) reclines. Detail of an Athenian red-figure *stamnos* of *c.* 430 B.C. by the Painter of the Louvre Symposium. Munich: Antikensammlungen (2410).

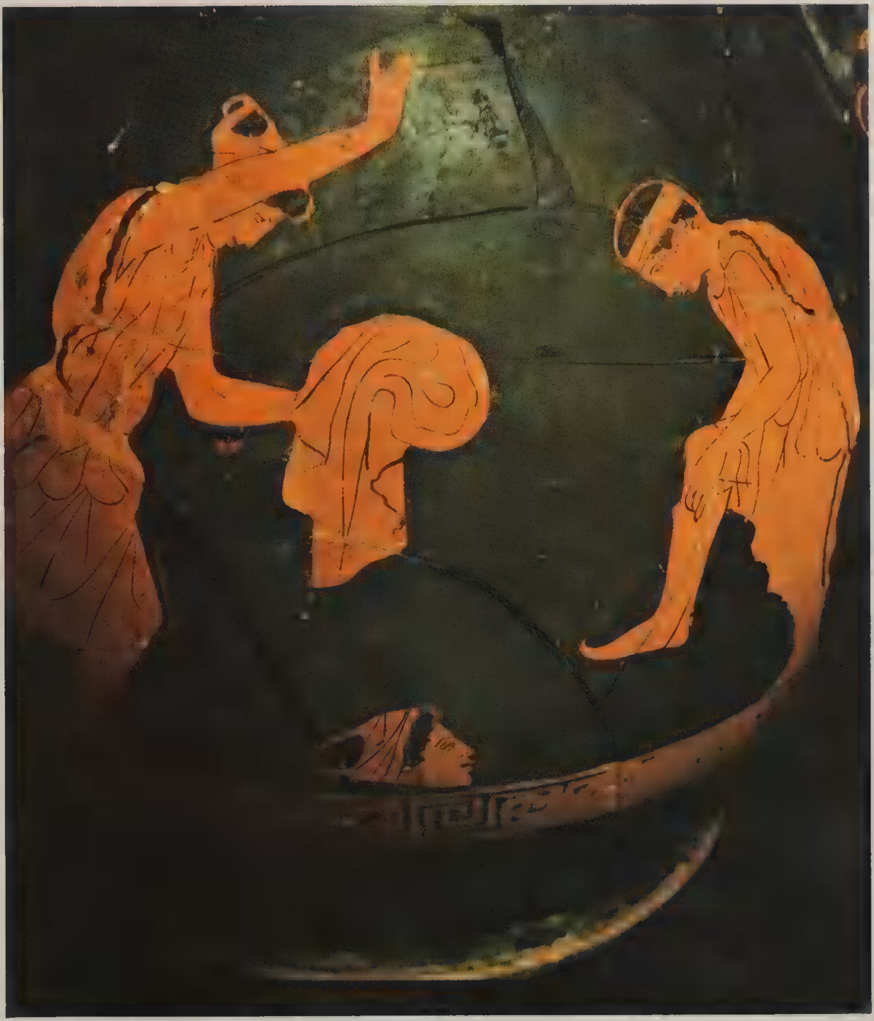
Our exploration of Eros in Greece has been largely through its literature, yet the most immediate appeal and communication of Greek life and behaviour is experienced through its art, and it is the directness of this appeal which we try to convey in the choice of pictures to illustrate this book. Yet we must ask how it is that the appeal and response is so immediate, so unlike those we can share with any other ancient culture.

The quality in Greek art which effects this rapport is the same as that in Greek literature – its essential humanity, its ability to render the divine in terms of the mortal, to promote human passion and action to a share of the divine. This is accompanied by a clarity of expression even within the confines of a conventionalised art, which makes Greek art as valuable a document of contemporary life as of religion or myth.

Opposite page: The party. A boy on his couch (*kline*) holds his pipes as he sings and slaps his knee to keep time for the dancing girl. Hanging behind him is the pipes' case. Athenian red-figure cup of *c.* 480 B.C. by the Brygos Painter. London: British Museum (E 68).


ΚΑΛΛΙΣΤΟ

Yet Greek artists learned to render sensuality only very slowly. The female nude appears in vase painting long before sculpture, and even there it is at first confined to mythological figures. Some early Aphrodites are naked, in the Eastern manner, but later always clothed until the High Classical period. On the other hand, the naked male was as familiar throughout Greek art as he must have been in life, although again not depicted with any sensual intent until after the Classical period. In the Archaic period it is the frank reporting of love-making, solitary, in pairs or groups, men together or with girls, that tells us most about Greek art's lack of inhibition, moral or religious, and indeed positive delight in such subjects. There could be no place for false modesty where the acts and organs of sex could also be so prominently displayed in contexts more religious than erotic, even in temple decoration or on votive objects. The scenes are presented without plain wrappers, unromantically, with a smile not a snigger, designed neither to excite nor to embarrass. That they might be held to excite or embarrass today reflects on the lingering sad inhibitions of modern society and on the comparative honesty of the Classical Greek – on this score, at least; on others, such as their attitude to slavery, the



Opposite page: Marble thrones for priests and officials in the front row of seats in the theatre of Dionysos at Athens.

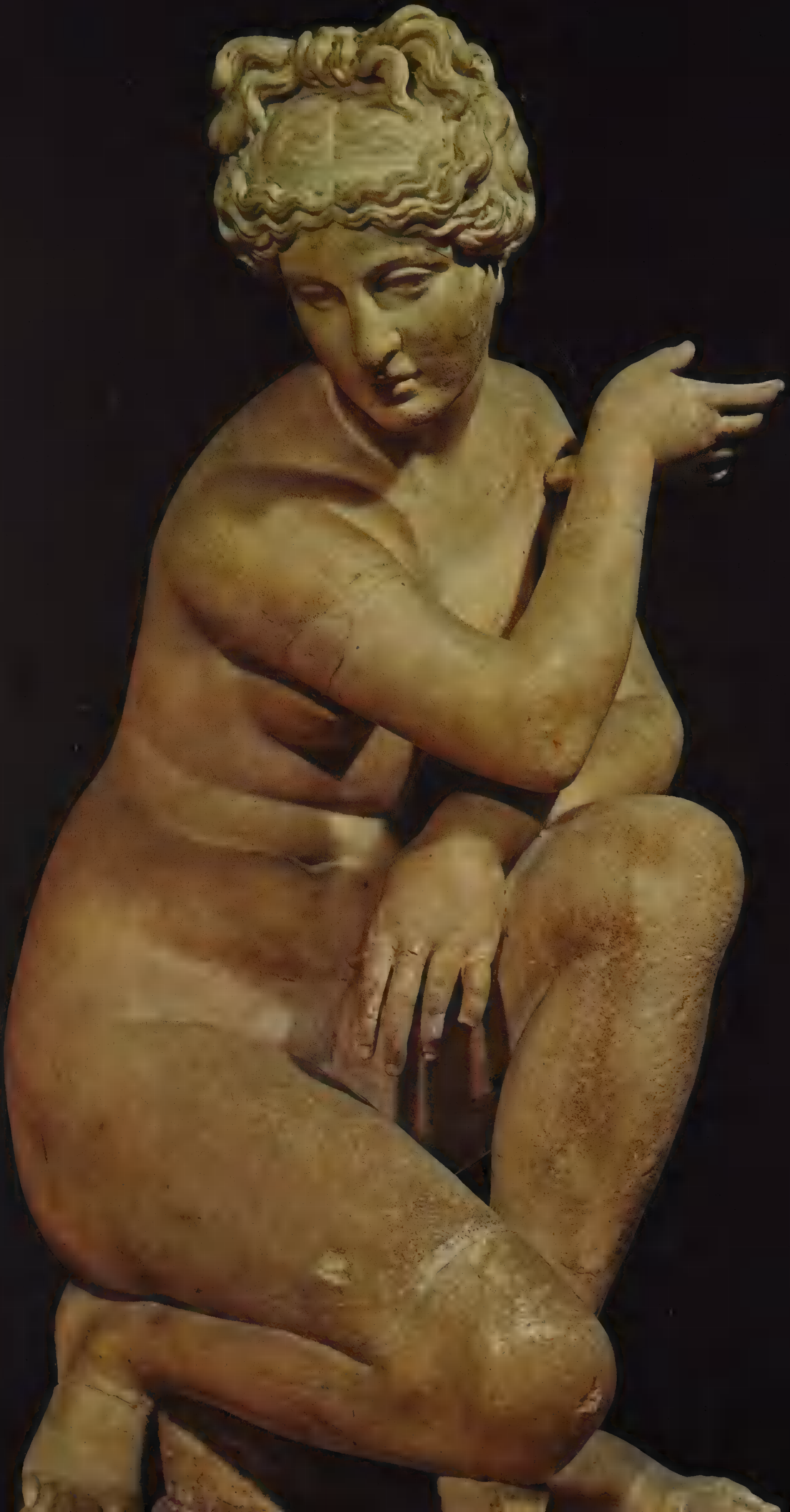
Right: Actors – youths dressing as women, the mask of one still on the ground. Detail of an Athenian red-figure *pelike* of *c.* 440–430 B.C. by the Phiale Painter. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts (98.883).

West has been slow enough to give effect to a liberal attitude whose source is itself as much Greek as Christian.

With the artist's developed skills in accurate portrayal of the human body in action came slowly the ability to depict emotion by more than conventional pose or gestures. In the fourth century he could add to this a command of line and mass which enabled him to add true sensuality to the rendering of the male and, at last, the female nude. This comes with closer study of the live model, rather than the pattern book, and brings with it stories of famous artists' models – of Phryne who modelled for Praxiteles' famous statue of Aphrodite which stood in a temple at Cnidus and could arouse such passion that it was once the object of indecent assault. The statue showed her at her bath, her hands fluttering modestly at her breast and loins, concealing, yet still demonstrating with no less frankness than those older Astarte figures with breasts and belly displayed. The combination of Classical Greek idealising of the human/divine body and observation from life leads to the yet more sensual treatment of the nude in the Hellenistic period, by which time the Greek artist has run the gamut of possibilities of expression in representational art.

The theatre of Dionysos at Athens seen from the walls of the Acropolis above.

Page 68: Aphrodite at her bath. Roman copy of a Hellenistic original in bronze by the sculptor Doidalsas, found in Rome in 1760. Rome: Vatican Museum (815). H. 0.82 m



The Erotic Art of Greece: a critical analysis

by Eugenio La Rocca

- PHALLUS VASE – SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Unlike the one below, this moulded vase, of Corinthian make, is patterned in a totally decorative, not a naturalistic manner. The decoration has now almost completely disappeared, but the motifs were typical of Corinthian pottery of the first half of the sixth century. In the case of the various moulded vases shaped like phalli, the scrotum was cast while the penis was modelled by hand. The hole at the top of the pubis permitted the easy flow of perfumed oil.

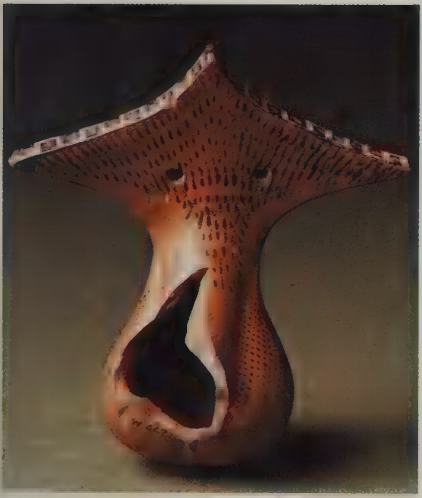
Apotropaic in motif, these objects could be offered in sanctuaries as dedications, and probably served everyday life as well. They are also found in graves, especially in Etruria.

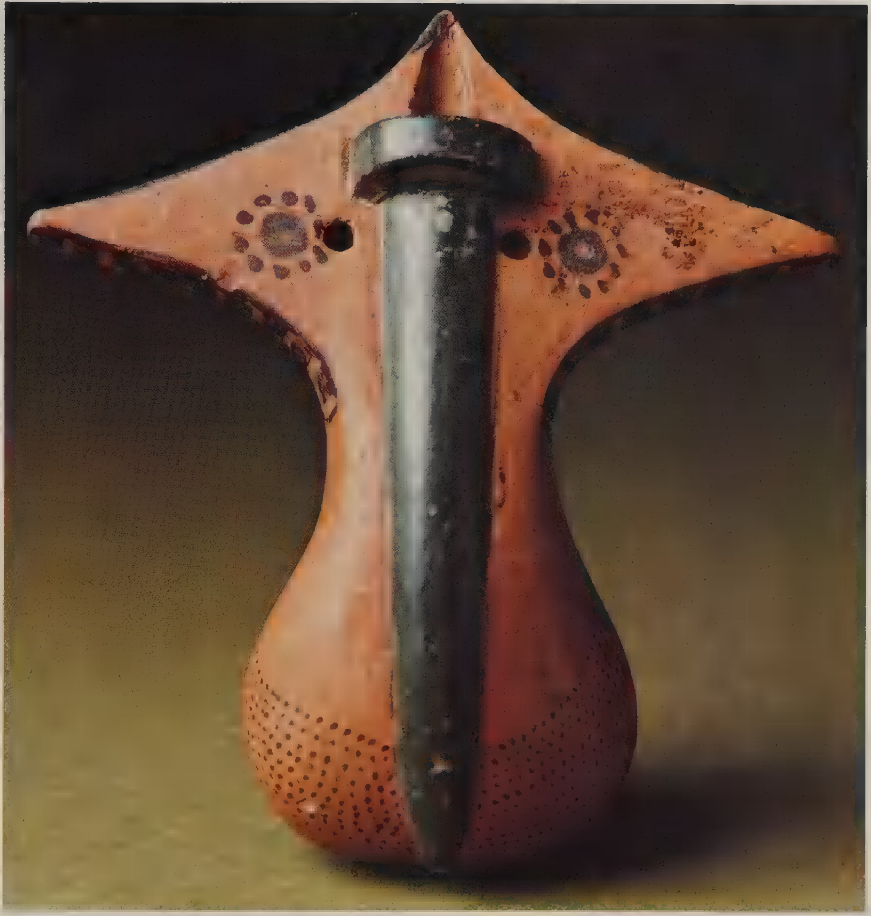
- PHALLUS VASE – SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Although fragmentary this can be recognised as one of the most refined moulded vases of its type. It is of East Greek origin, perhaps from Ionia. From the way the pubis is shaped it can be dated to the second half of the sixth century B.C. Rhodes and Corinth, the two best-known sources for moulded vases, both stopped production about 550 B.C., and this Ionian vase is of a derivative group. The painted decoration is very well preserved; the hairs on the pubis are represented with fine black lines, the scrotum with regular lines of dots. On the back, beside the mouth of the vase, are two rosettes, and the two holes allowed it to be carried by a thong.

PHALLUS VASE
Moulded vase, from Kamiros
(Rhodes). Second quarter of
sixth century B.C.
London: British Museum (A 1676).
H. 0.085 m

Below and right:
PHALLUS VASE
Moulded vase.
Mid sixth century B.C.
London: British Museum (A 1659).
H. 0.115 m





▪ THESEUS AND ARIADNE (?) – JUG FROM TRAGLIATELLA

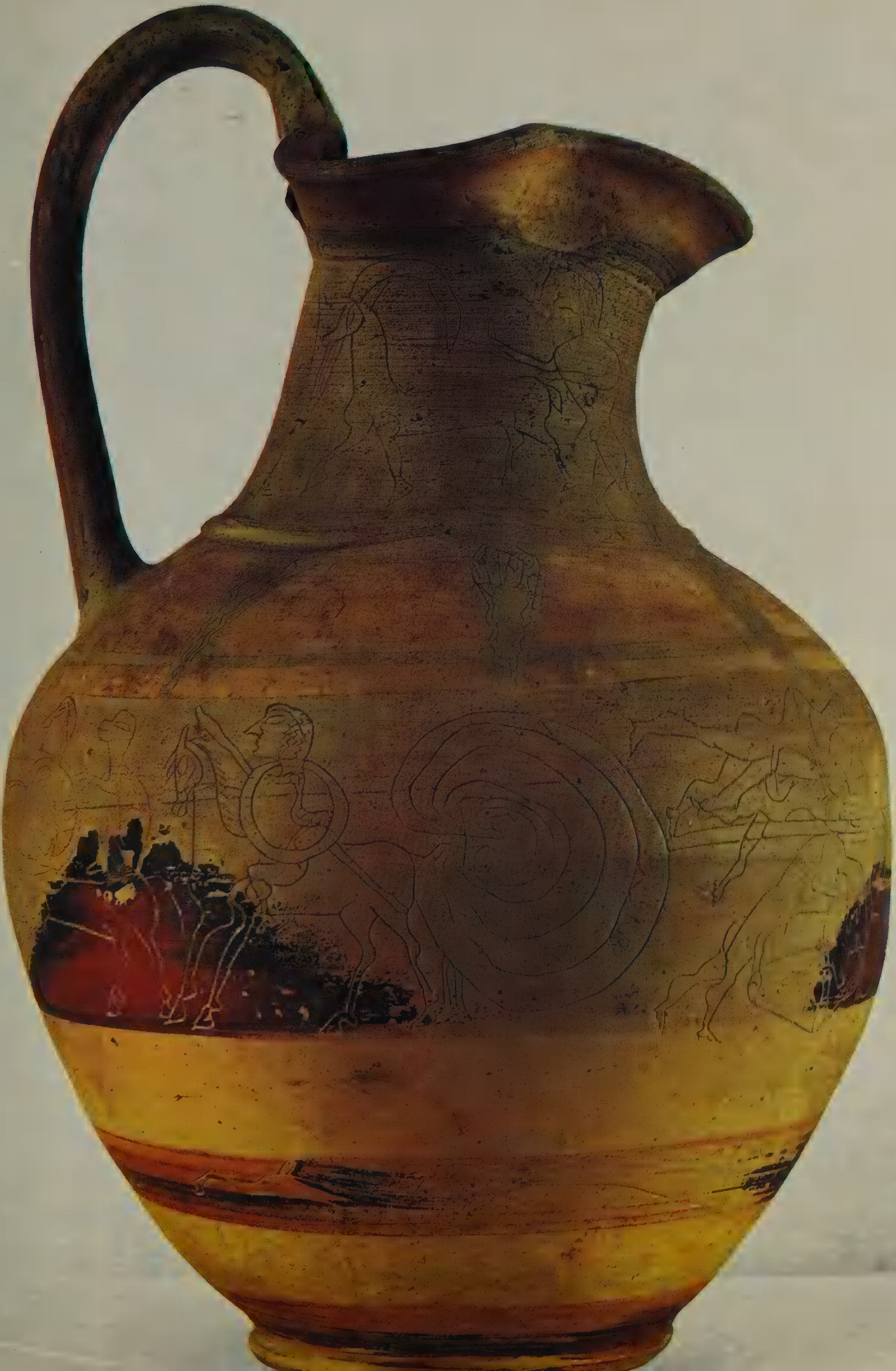
pages 73 and 74–5

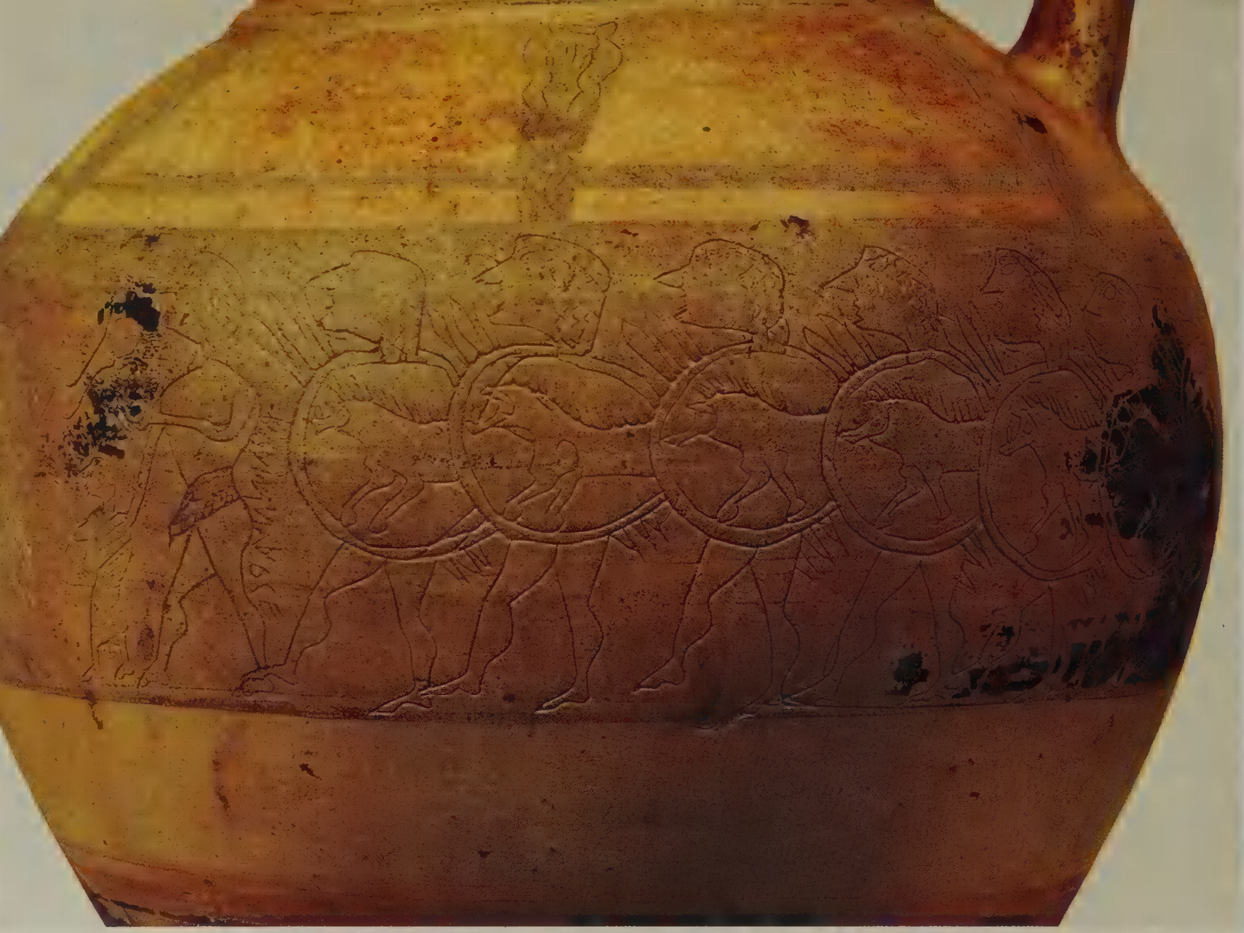
Etruscan imitation of Greek pottery goes back to the eighth century B.C. but it is only in the seventh that, under the influence of Proto-Corinthian wares, the first human figures appear on the vases. The predecessors of this *oinochoe*, which imitates a Proto-Corinthian shape, are probably vessels like the *Chigi Vase*, of the mid seventh century. The subjects of the scenes on these vases present some problems. There is no lack of mythological and narrative themes on Proto-Corinthian vases, for example, the little ovoid *aryballos* in the Louvre depicting the Rape of Helen by Theseus. Nevertheless, the scenes are tiny and on small surfaces. In the case of the *Chigi Vase* the artist has preferred, with the single exception of a scene of the Judgement of Paris, to depict genre scenes of hunters and horsemen, warriors and animals, all arranged in separate friezes which reflect the structure of the vase. Thus each figurative element is subordinated to the general pattern. This is not the case with the Tragliatella *oinochoe* where the composition is freer, and the taste for more marked expression has led the artist to treat the human body inorganically. Thus gesture and action are prominent, the powerful bodies stand on tiny legs, and the enormous heads carry bold features.

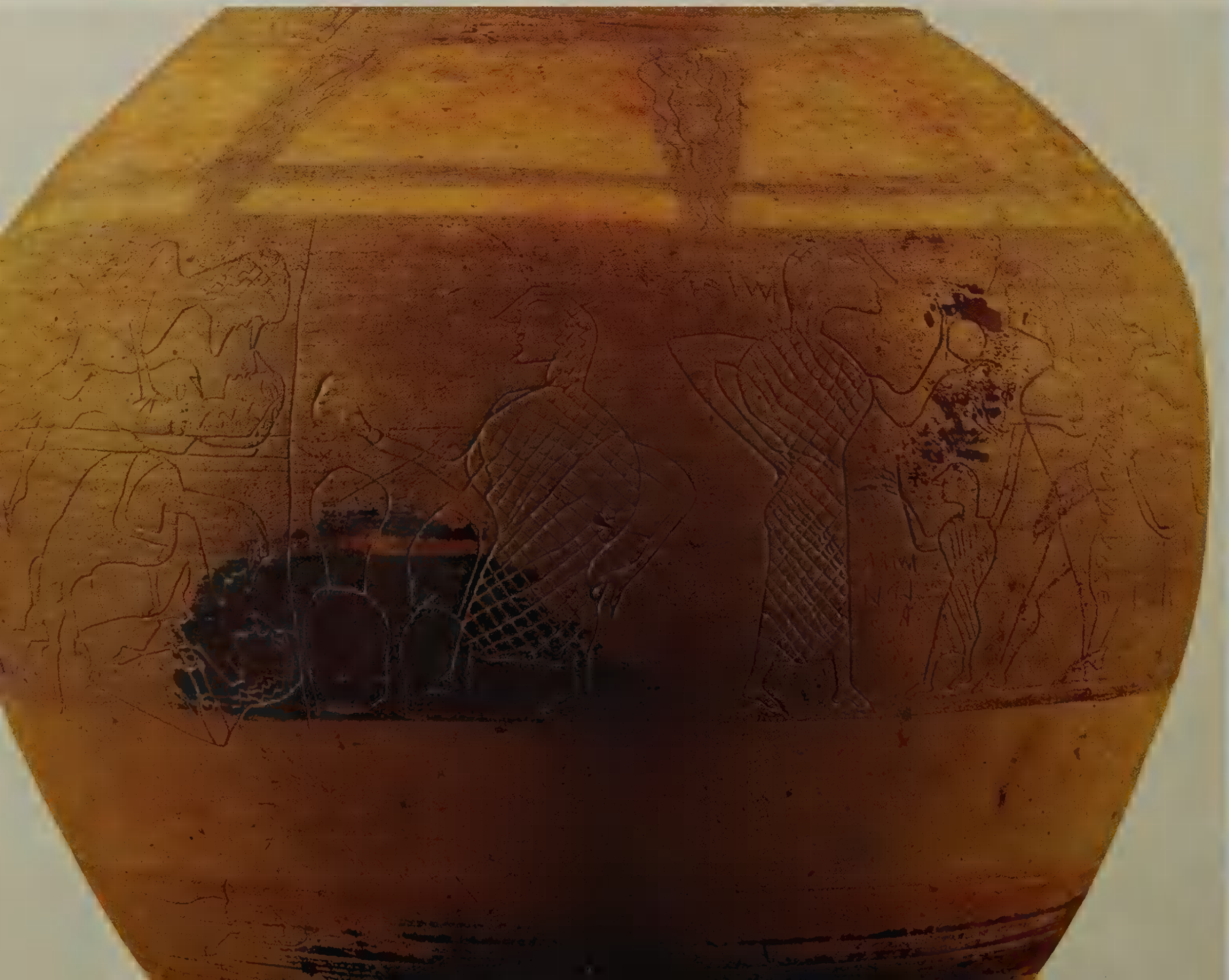
The explanation of the subject is particularly difficult. On the neck there is a naked man leading a goat to pasture. By his side a man in just a loincloth seems to be leading a woman in a network cloak on to a ship. On the body of the *oinochoe* is represented a labyrinth, two horsemen with a monkey behind one of them, a naked man with a staff, and a line of seven men armed with shields and spears but without helmets. A rather more complicated scene follows: a woman is giving something to a man in a loincloth who seems to be the head of the small group, and the man is giving her something in exchange. A girl in the middle appears to be exhorting them. Behind her is a woman with a strange object in her hand, perhaps a mirror or a fan, standing near some rocks (?). The last scene, the one shown in the detailed illustration on page 75, depicts two of the most explicit scenes of love-making in antiquity.

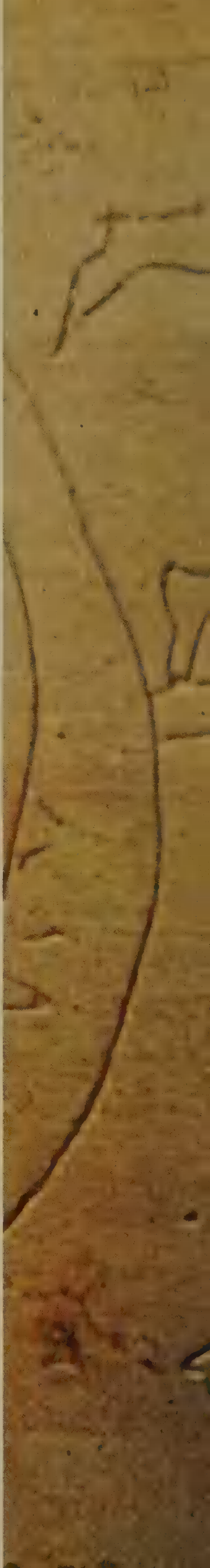
We must set aside the vexed question of the Etruscan inscription, obscure except for the word *truia* written on the inside of the labyrinth, which does not refer to the city of King Priam but seems to mean 'arena'. The writer is convinced that the subject is the myth of Theseus and Ariadne, even though many details defy explanation. On the neck it is Ariadne giving the ball of twine to Theseus, who in his turn gives Ariadne an apple as a pledge of love and symbol of fidelity. The subsequent scenes may be a rather realistic representation of the loves of Theseus and Ariadne, and the lone woman among the rocks may be Ariadne abandoned. The meaning of the two horsemen and the armed youths is not clear, unless they are the escort of honour for Theseus arriving in Crete, in his role as Royal Prince. One thing seems to prove that the scene takes place in Knossos, the city of Minos: between the neck and the body of the *oinochoe* are drawn garlanded heads of bulls. It seems very likely to me that this is a reference to the Minotaur or rather to the cult of the bull at Knossos. The hypothesis put forward by some scholars that the scenes on this jug are simply a juxtaposition of various subjects poorly interpreted by a modest but lively Etruscan artist is improbable.

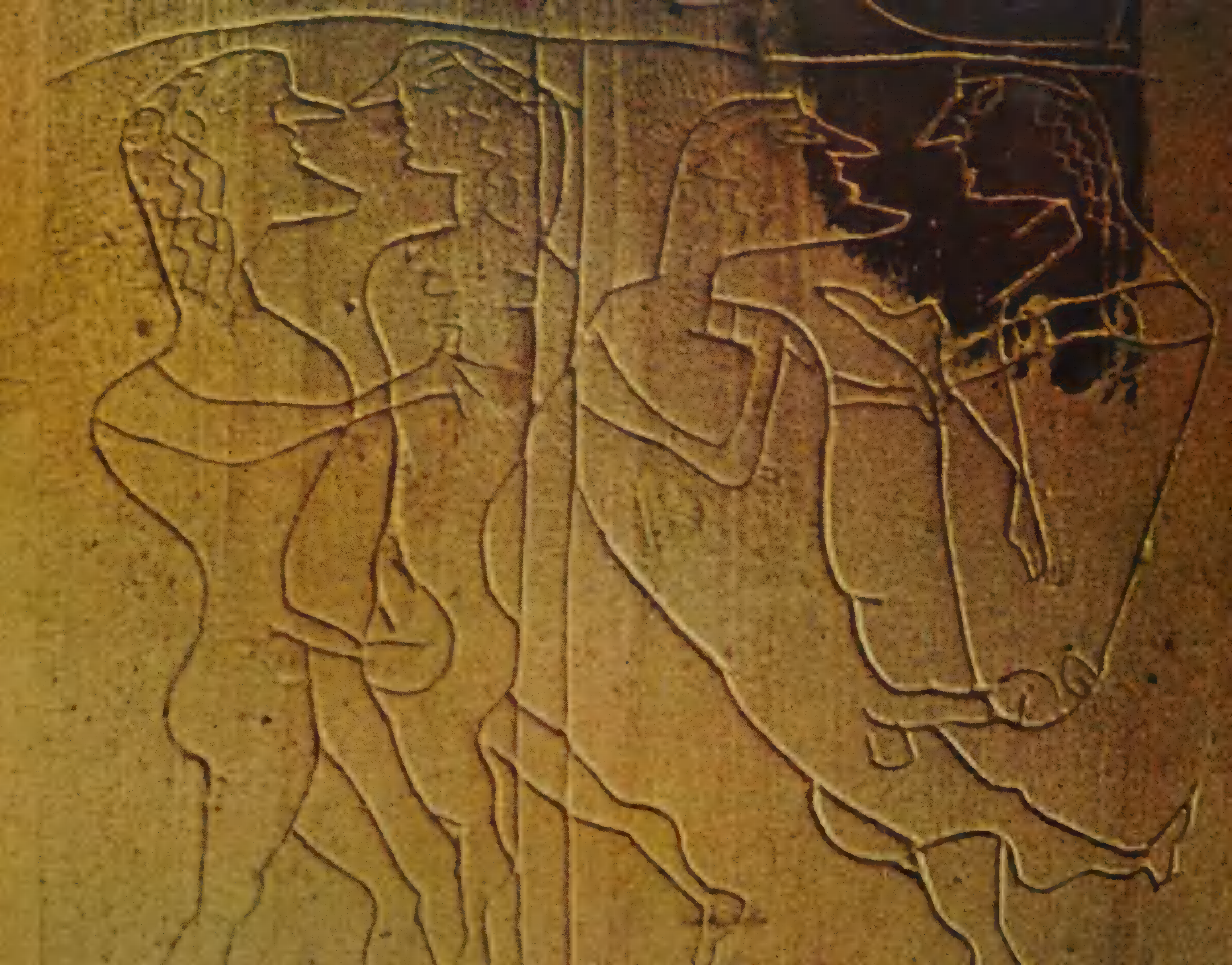
Opposite page and pages 74–5
THESEUS AND ARIADNE (?)
Etruscan *oinochoe* imitating
Corinthian, from Tragliatella
(Bracciano).
Late seventh century B.C.
Rome: Palazzo dei Conservatori
(Mob. 358). H. 0.24 m











• *KOMOS* REVELS

This little *amphoriskos* is a work of the Tydeus Painter, a Corinthian artist who worked in the second quarter of the sixth century B.C. This was the last phase of Corinthian production of vases with figure decoration. Excessive use of polychromy gives a confused effect especially on vases of such small dimensions. The design itself, though pleasant and vivacious, is not clear and the lines of incision on the bodies do not always match the areas of colour. The scene must be a *komos*, a cheerful celebration in which men and hetaerae take part, the women here depicted naked and intent on dancing, and on their companions.

Such *komoi* were a very common feature of Greek life. They began as orgies sacred to Dionysos; later they took on a profane character although they always retained some sort of connection with the worship of Dionysos. *Komoi* were exclusively a masculine affair; only hetaerae and girl flute-players were allowed access, to entertain the guests.

• TYRRHENIAN VASES

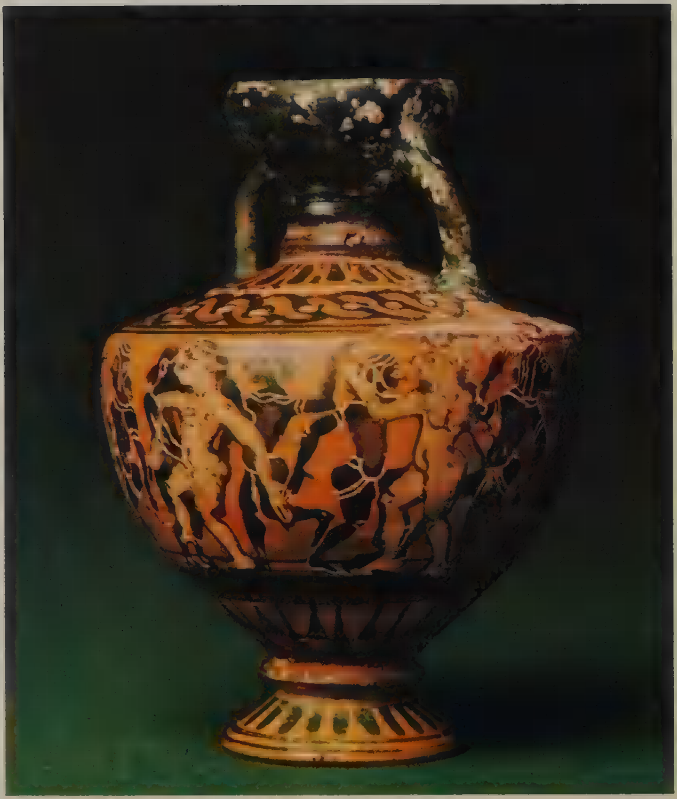
pages 76 right, 77, 78

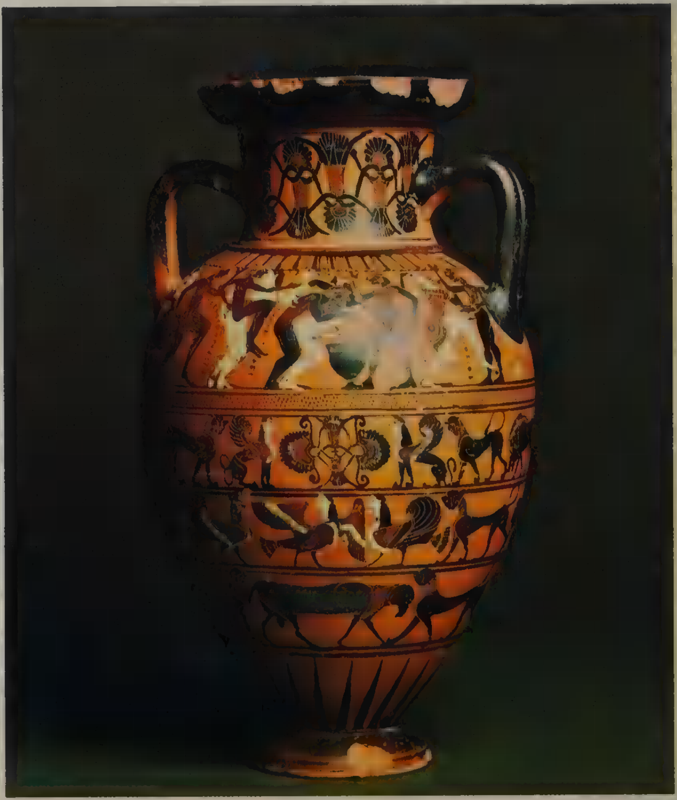
Tyrrhenian vases are a series of amphorae, widely exported to Etruria but Attic in production and exhibiting a certain similarity in decoration to contemporary Corinthian vase painting. We are in the second quarter of the sixth century B.C., when it seems that the Attic craftsmen, to gain a hold on a market dominated by Corinthian vases, tried at first to beat their competitors by imitating and bettering their products.

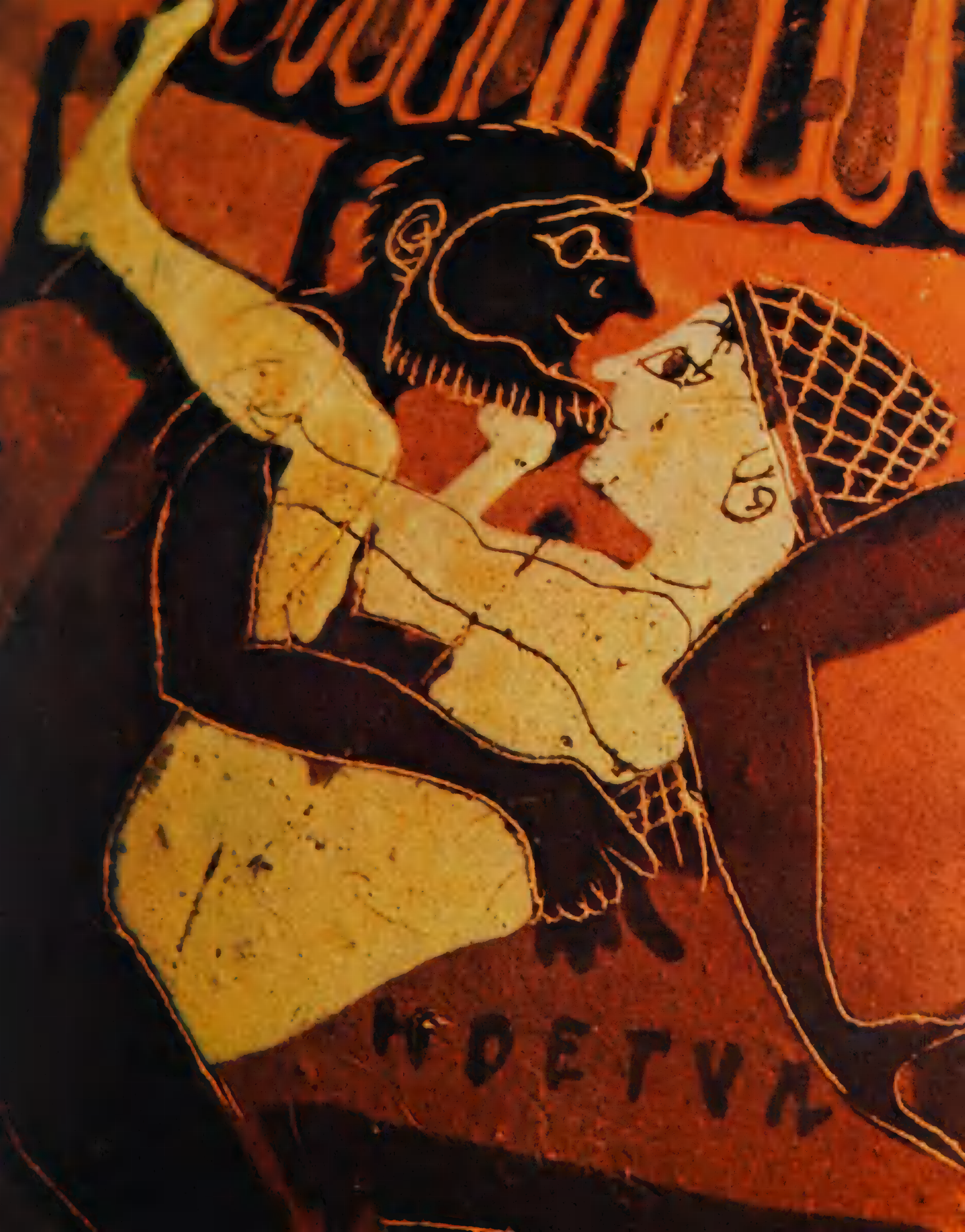
To this group belong these two amphorae, which are in a certain sense twins even though they were not found together; they are in fact almost identical in

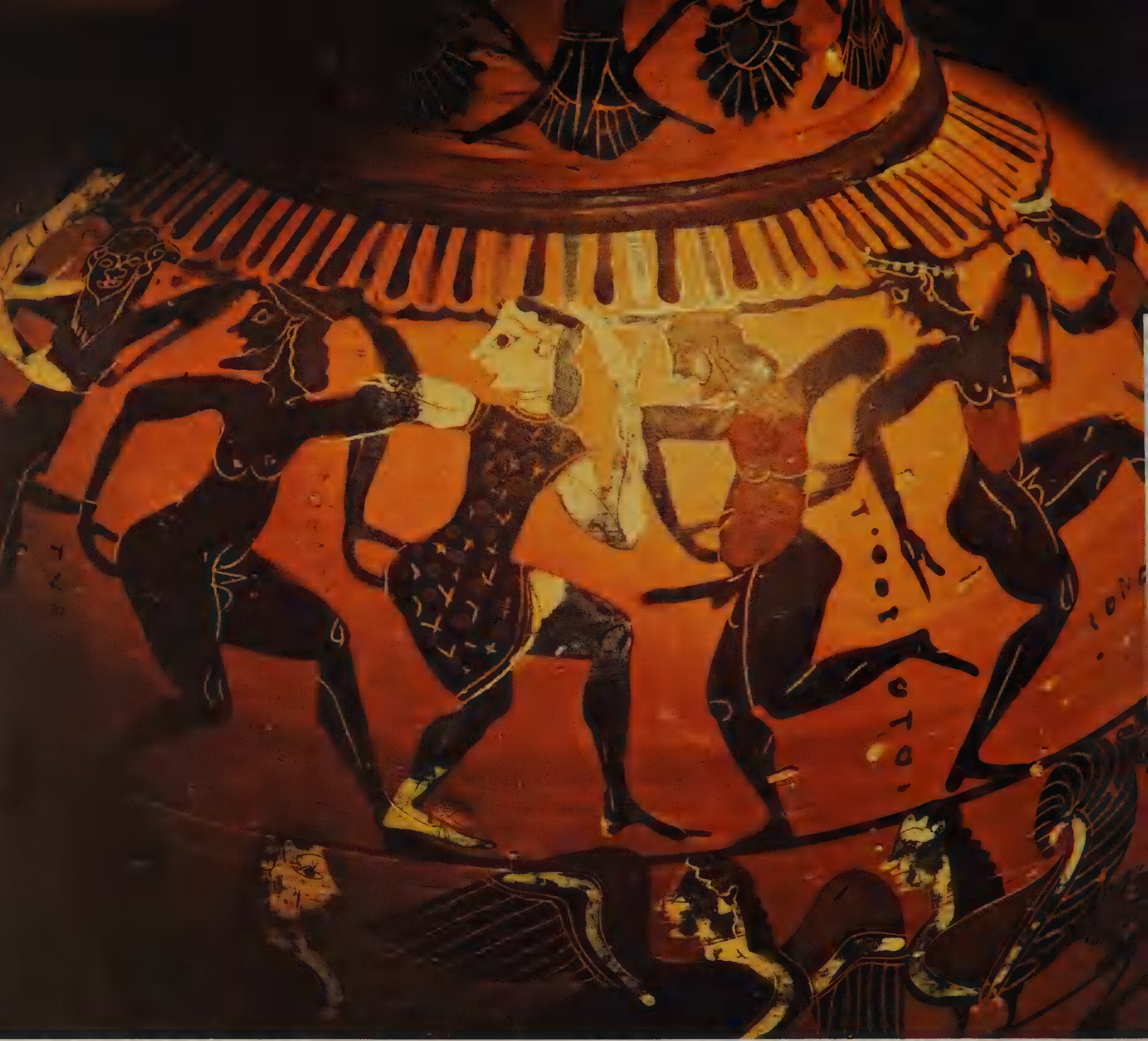
Below left
KOMOS REVELS
Late Corinthian *amphoriskos* by the Tydeus Painter, from Corinth.
Second quarter of sixth century B.C.
London: British Museum (B 41).
H. 0.095 m

Below, opposite and page 78
TYRRHENIAN AMPHORAE
Attic black-figure amphorae of the Guglielmi Group, from Vulci.
Second quarter of sixth century B.C.
Munich: Antikensammlungen (1431). H. 0.41 m; and 1432 (part).

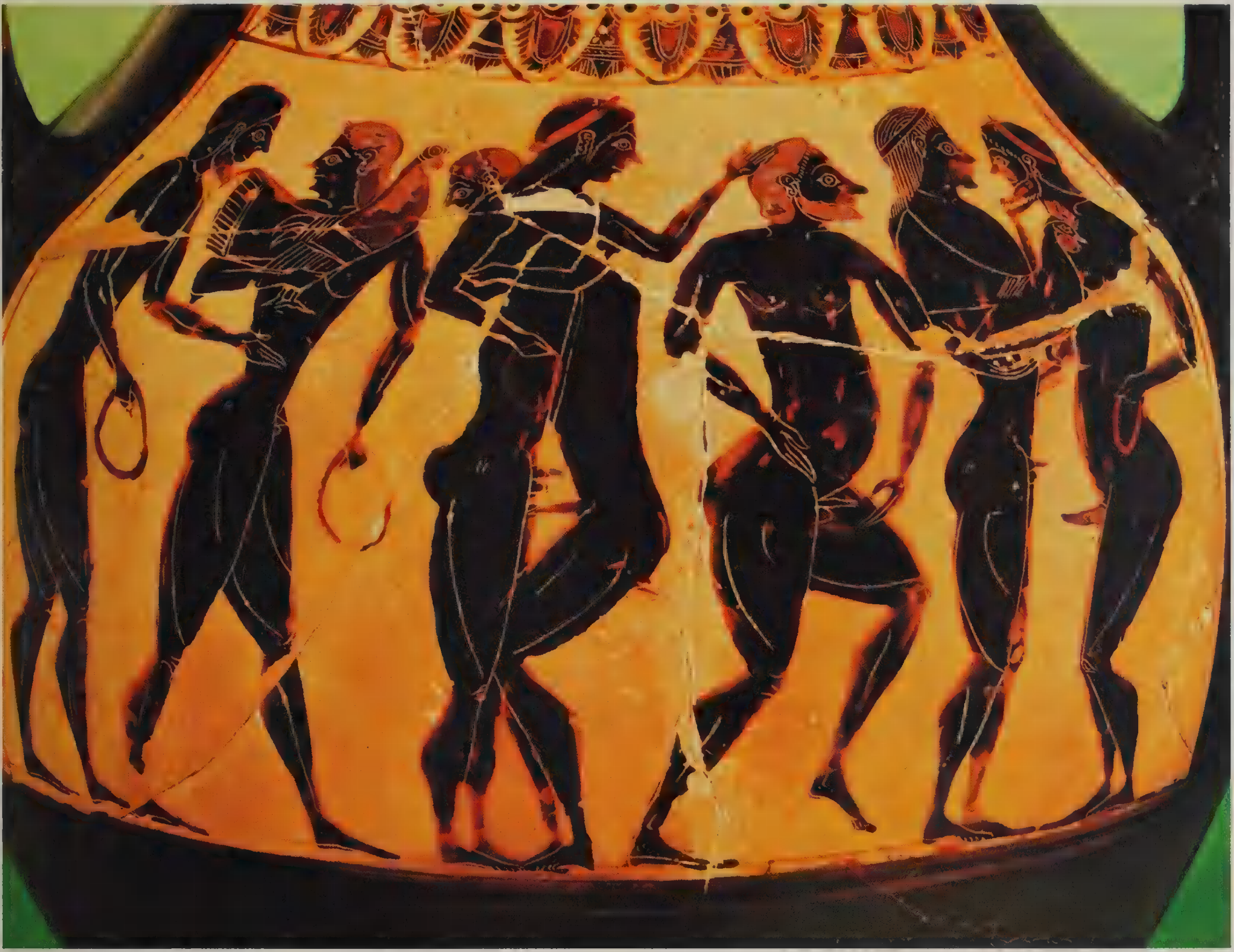








form and dimensions and were painted by the same artist who belonged to the so-called Guglielmi Group. Elements typical of Corinthian vases are the friezes decorated with lines of animals and monsters such as sirens and sphinxes. A rigorous symmetry distinguishes these friezes, in contrast to the remarkable vivacity of the scene depicted on the upper frieze, an orgiastic Dionysiac *komos* with satyrs and maenads. Following the usual artistic convention the women's bodies are painted white. The iconography, too, is drawn from Corinthian prototypes. Nevertheless, note that the satyrs are not represented according to the conventions that were to become normal from the second half of the sixth century onwards, that is, they have neither tails nor bestial faces. On these two amphorae they are represented in almost totally human form, and many scholars regard this rather as a mortal *komos* with hetaerae.



MEN AND YOUTHS
Attic black-figure amphora by the Painter of Berlin 1686, from Vulci. c. 540 B.C.
London: British Museum (W 39).

▪ MEN AND YOUTHS

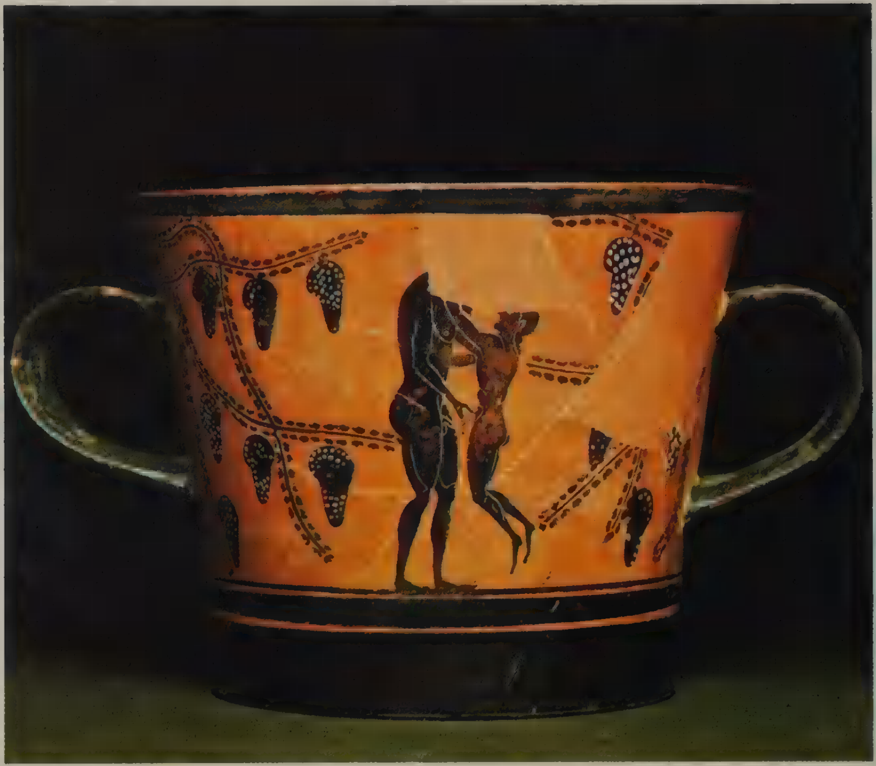
This amphora, remarkable for its refined decorative detail, can be attributed to an artist close to the circle of vase painters known as Group E, many of them very gifted artists, companions of Exekias who was, without doubt, the greatest Attic painter in the black-figure style. The subjects on the vases are for the most part *komoi*, satyrs and maenads dancing, horsemen, elaborate chariot scenes, myth. The scene on this amphora is Dionysiac in atmosphere but the actors are mortal – a bearded man is dancing while three others are occupied with youths.

The origins of Greek homosexuality present a great problem and attempts to connect it with the Greek love of beauty, whether masculine or feminine, or with the tendencies expressed by Plato in his *Symposium*, do not explain much. Its origin may be sought in the relationship between men and women which in Greek society was far from satisfactory. A woman counted for little either as a daughter or a wife. The level of indifference towards women can easily be understood from a passage of Plutarch referring to a law of Solon which, it appears, required that a man should have sexual relations with his wife at least three times a month. For this to have been formulated as a law, even allowing for exaggeration, suggests that it must have been a rule that was often ignored. Women had power only in that part of the household that was confided to them.

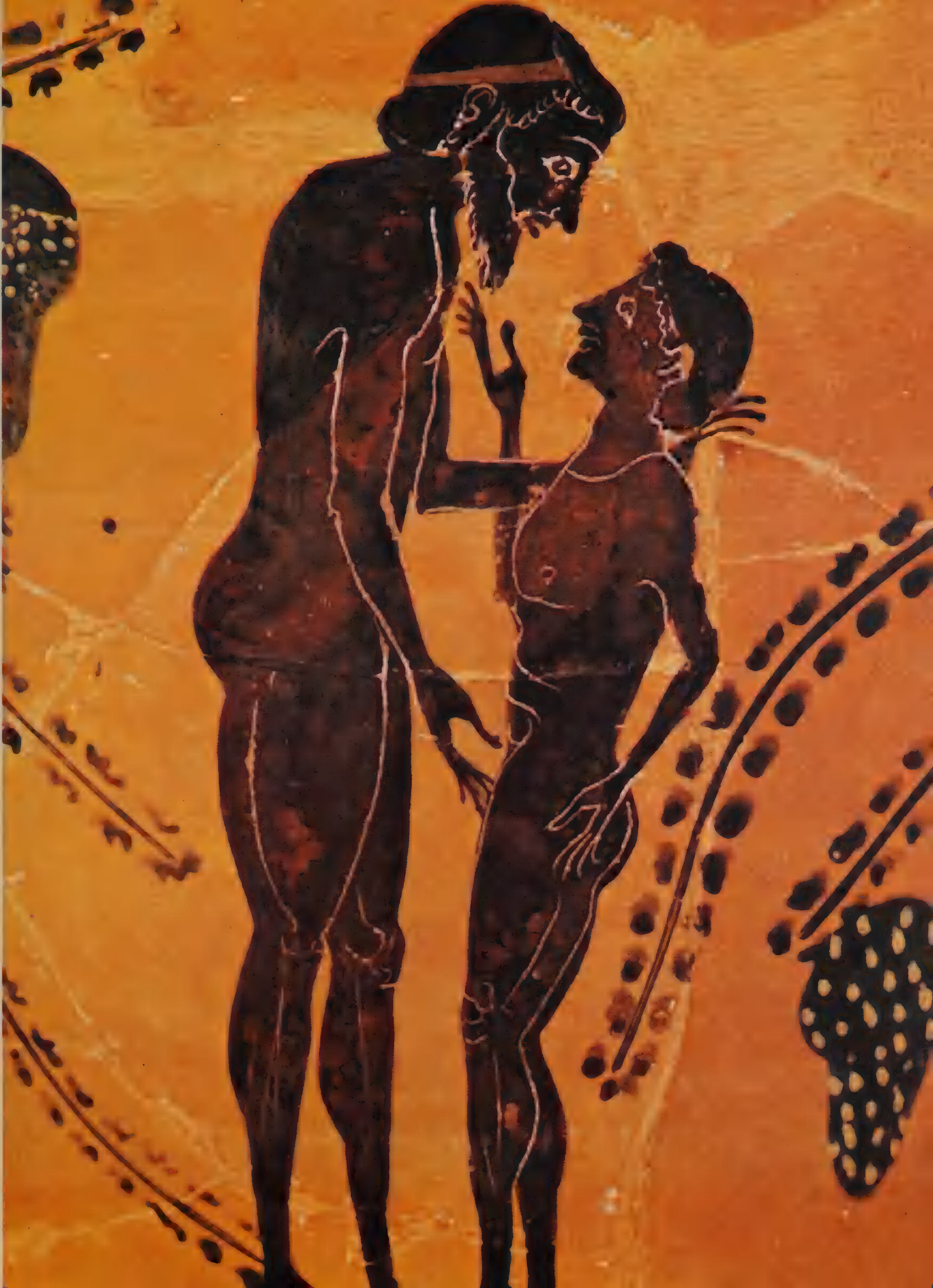
Some students have tried to explain Greek homosexuality on Freudian lines by reference to the mother/son relationships, the only one in which a woman could compensate for her continual humiliation. That is to say, an unhealthy relationship would have arisen between mother and son because the relationship between husband and wife was already unhealthy. Within the family the male child grew up with a comparative indifference towards men and a deferential fear of his mother and of women in general. This fear, and an unconscious reaction against the domination and power of the mother within the house, is thought to have given rise to Greek interests in homosexuality. When the boy passed puberty he found himself in a male-dominated society, and his marked fear of the dominating role of women and perhaps a certain feeling of inferiority with regard to them, complicated the situation and drove him to lead his life totally apart from the world of women. It is no accident that only very young women were accepted in such society while older women were looked on as dangerous viragoes. But it is difficult to probe the psychology of Classical Greece, and our view of the role of homosexuality may well be seriously distorted.

• MEN AND YOUTHS

This vase depicts on both sides the usual scenes of a homosexual approach between a man and a youth. The novelty in this case is in the setting. Around the two lovers twine branches from which hang bunches of grapes. The burst of



MEN AND YOUTHS
Attic black-figure *karchesion*.
Late sixth century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (08.292).
H. 0.114 m



affection of the boy jumping up to embrace his lover is very uncommon in such scenes.

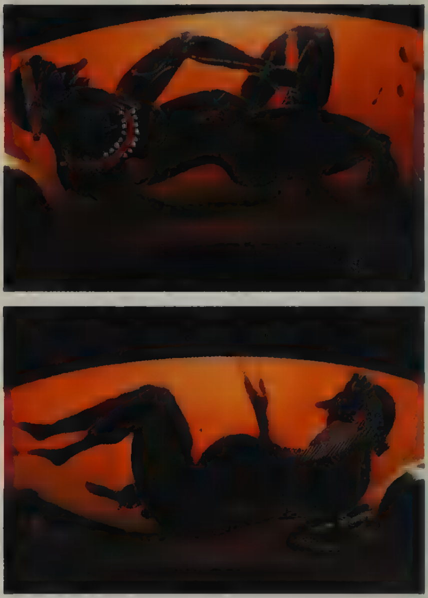
The shape of this cup is interesting. It seems to derive, through Boeotia, from a shape created in the north-east Aegean area. The vase, called a *karchesion*, had no foot, and in its oldest form, which goes back at least to the seventh century B.C., had flaring walls and two vertical handles rising to the rim. The *karchesion*, for reasons of which we are ignorant, may have been connected with the cult of the Kabeiroi who were venerated on Samothrace, Lemnos and near Thebes. In Classical times these mysterious divinities were identified with the gods of Greek Olympus, with Hades, Hephaistos, Hermes, Demeter and Kore. At Thebes the senior Kabeiros became identified with Dionysos and the scenes on local vases can be connected at least in part with the lively and licentious world of Dionysos. The use of a form like the *karchesion* in Attic black figure, which is extremely rare, is possibly explained by its association with Dionysos and the Kabeiroi.

• TWO MEN AT EXERCISE

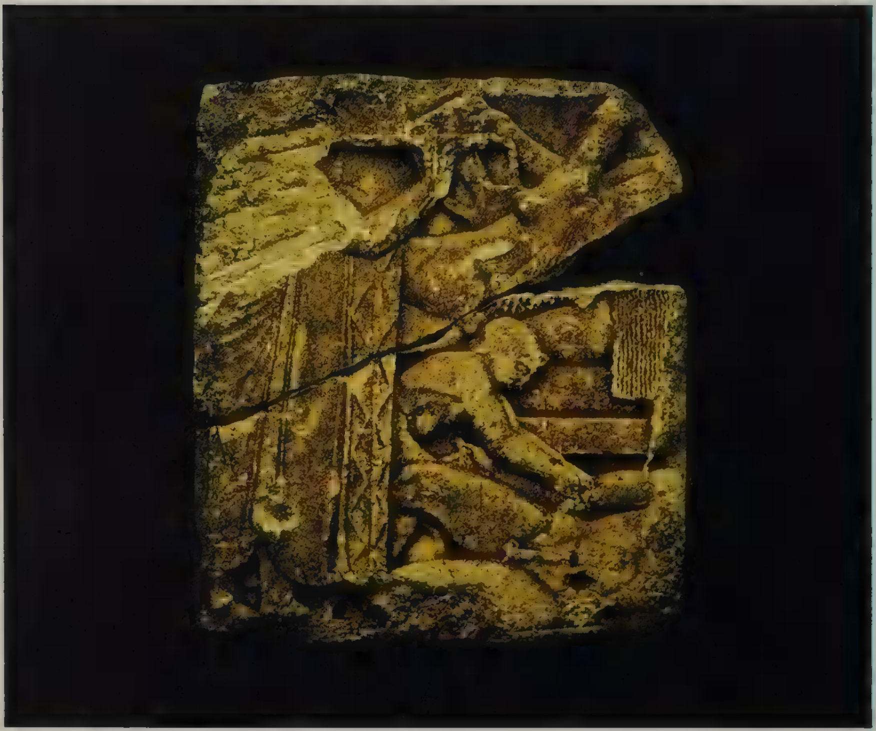
This curious cup is by one of the great artists of Attic black figure, the Amasis Painter. His preference for lively scenes, full of movement, is demonstrated on this cup which represents men, it should be noted, not satyrs. Their preoccupation is not an uncommon theme with vase painters.

• BANQUET SCENE

The fragmentary relief was found in an area which had served as a cemetery from the Sub-Mycenaean period to the fourth century B.C. It is probably part of a funeral monument, and the upper cornice with its out-curving moulding shows that it would be wrong to regard it as architectural frieze sculpture from



TWO MEN AT EXERCISE
Attic black-figure cup by the Amasis Painter.
530–520 B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (10.651).



BANQUET SCENE
Marble relief from Kos.
Late sixth century B.C.

a temple. It very probably decorated a simple funeral monument in the form of a pillar and we are not obliged to restore a structure as elaborate as the famous Nereid Monument at Xanthos, which is also funerary but composed of a temple-like building on a high podium.

The subject also indicates that the intention of the monument is funerary: it is a banquet scene such as is seen at approximately the same period in the frescoes of the Etruscan tombs at Tarquinia, and in those of the peripheral Greek world in East and West, in Lycia and at Paestum. The fragmentary nature of the relief requires some explanation of the scene. A naked hetaera is reclining on a couch embracing a man who is stretched out by her side, his head turned back. Of the man we see only the right hand holding the lyre. At the left stands a piper. At the foot of the couch a young man is stretched out on the ground, probably drunk and certainly erect, while a young boy tries to rouse him. To judge from his position it looks as though the youth was leaning on his left elbow with his right hand between the boy's thighs.

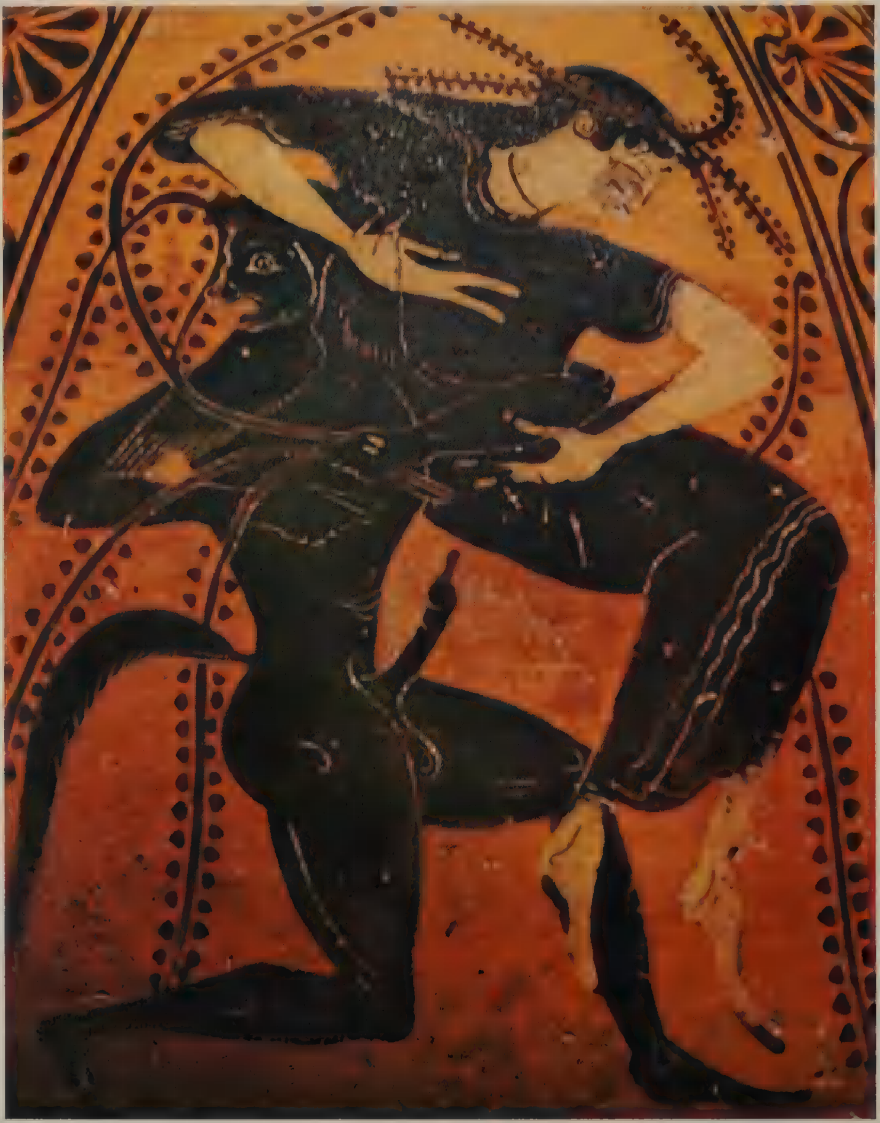
Subjects of this sort in a funerary context are not altogether unexpected in a peripheral Greek region, although in mainland Greece the materialistic idea of the other world, providing pleasures similar to those of life, is unfamiliar. The Greeks seem to have had no consistent and clear views about the afterlife. On Athenian vases where we see similar scenes, they are rendered with quite a different intention, and can be quite simply referred to the aristocratic world of the *komos*. It is interesting too to observe that the enormous popularity of Athenian vases in the Etruscan world is partly explicable in terms of the representations upon them. The fine cups with banquet scenes were deposited in tombs as the precious possessions of the dead but may never have been used in everyday life except perhaps in the palaces of the *seigneurs* of Vulci and Caere. On the other hand, in Athenian tombs figure-decorated pottery is rarely found. It is not difficult to deduce that the vase painters were well aware of the different function of their wares in the Etruscan market, and that they started to make a careful choice of the scenes for their vases with knowledge of the demand of their customers in Italy.

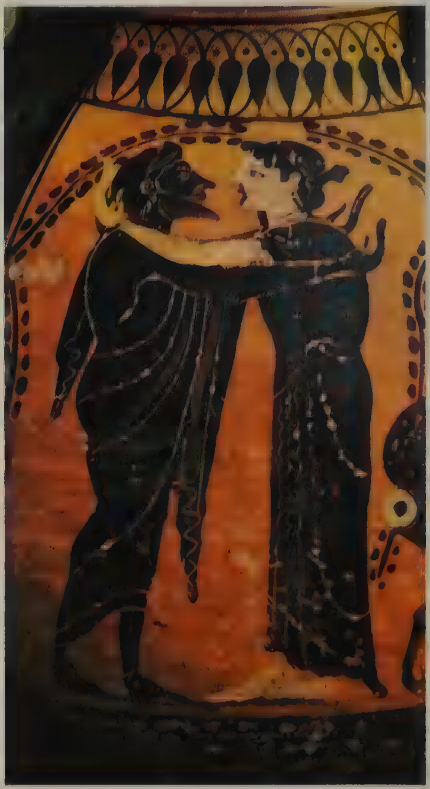
What has been said may go some way to explain why the closest parallels to the scene on the relief are to be found on Athenian red-figure vases of the end of the sixth century. The girl's naked body finds its kin in the bodies of the naked hetaerae on Euphronios' famous *psykter* in Leningrad. The stomach muscles of the youth stretched out beneath the couch contrast with the fleshy quality of the thighs and body of the hetaera and piper in their careful detail, and they call to mind the rendering of the naked male body by the vase painter Euphronios and his contemporaries, such as Phintias. The rather abrupt contrast between the impoverished and inert rendering of the dress and the robust and compact structure of the bodies may be explained by the fact that the artist had no sculptural models to refer to and was more directly inspired by drawings, such as those on the Athenian vases of the end of the sixth century. Recently a fragment of a contemporary relief of fairly similar style has appeared on the market in Germany.

▪ SATYR AND MAENAD – MAN AND WOMAN

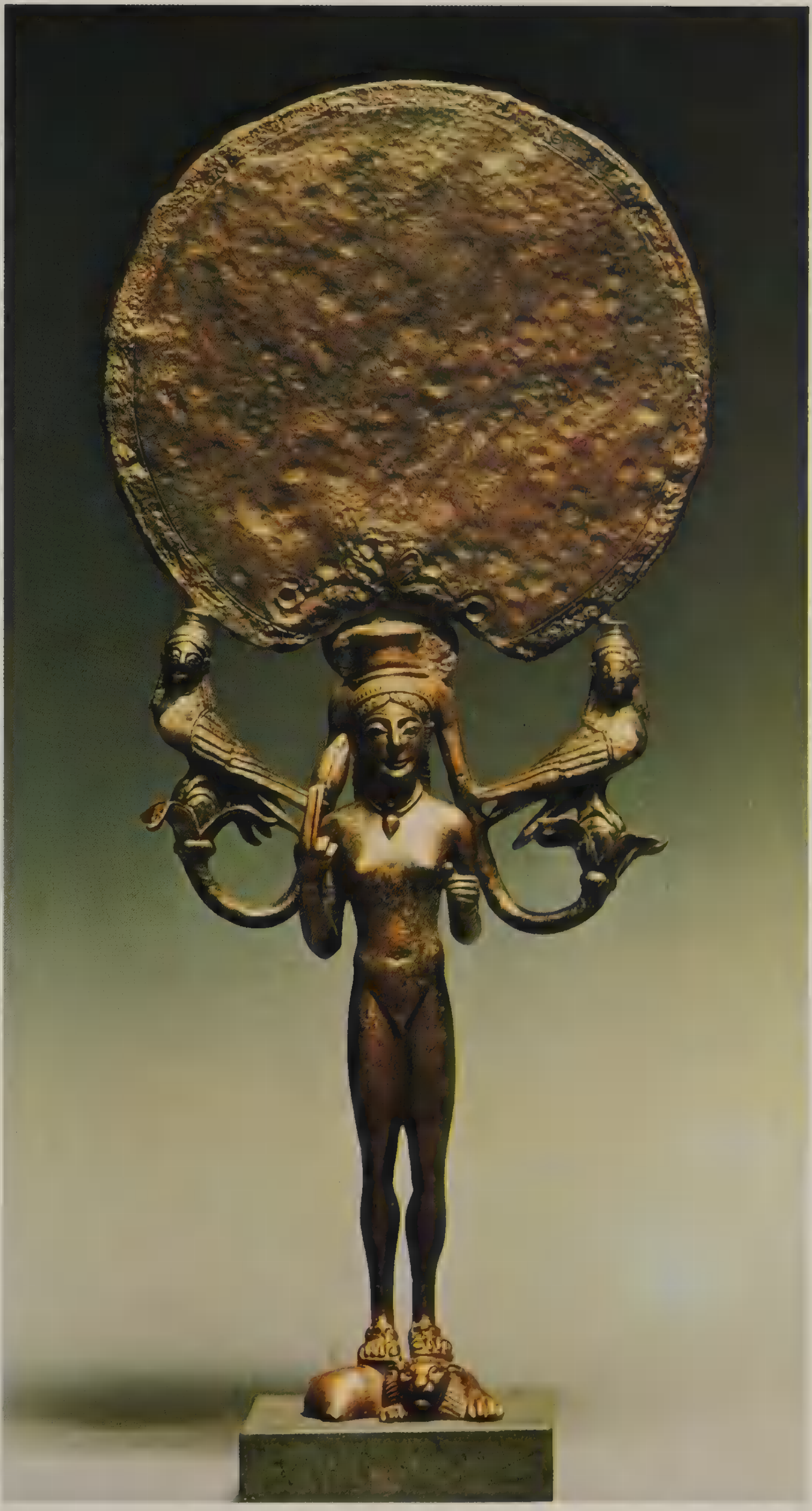
A man and woman kiss in a vine arbour. On Attic vases scenes with just two figures are common. Sometimes it is the departure of a warrior, on others just a genre scene with vague reference to the Dionysiac world of symposia. In fact the scene on the other side of the *pelike* is more typical; an ithyphallic satyr seizing a maenad. Here, too, vine branches intertwine and form a background to the simple but colourful scene. There is of course a subtle and ironical contrast between the two sides of the vase.

A number of other vases by the Acheloos Painter are known; he is not far removed from the so-called Leagros Group. Some stylistic innovations in the treatment of bodies and in the choice of subjects make it likely that this artist was a contemporary of Euphronios, the great artist of red figure.

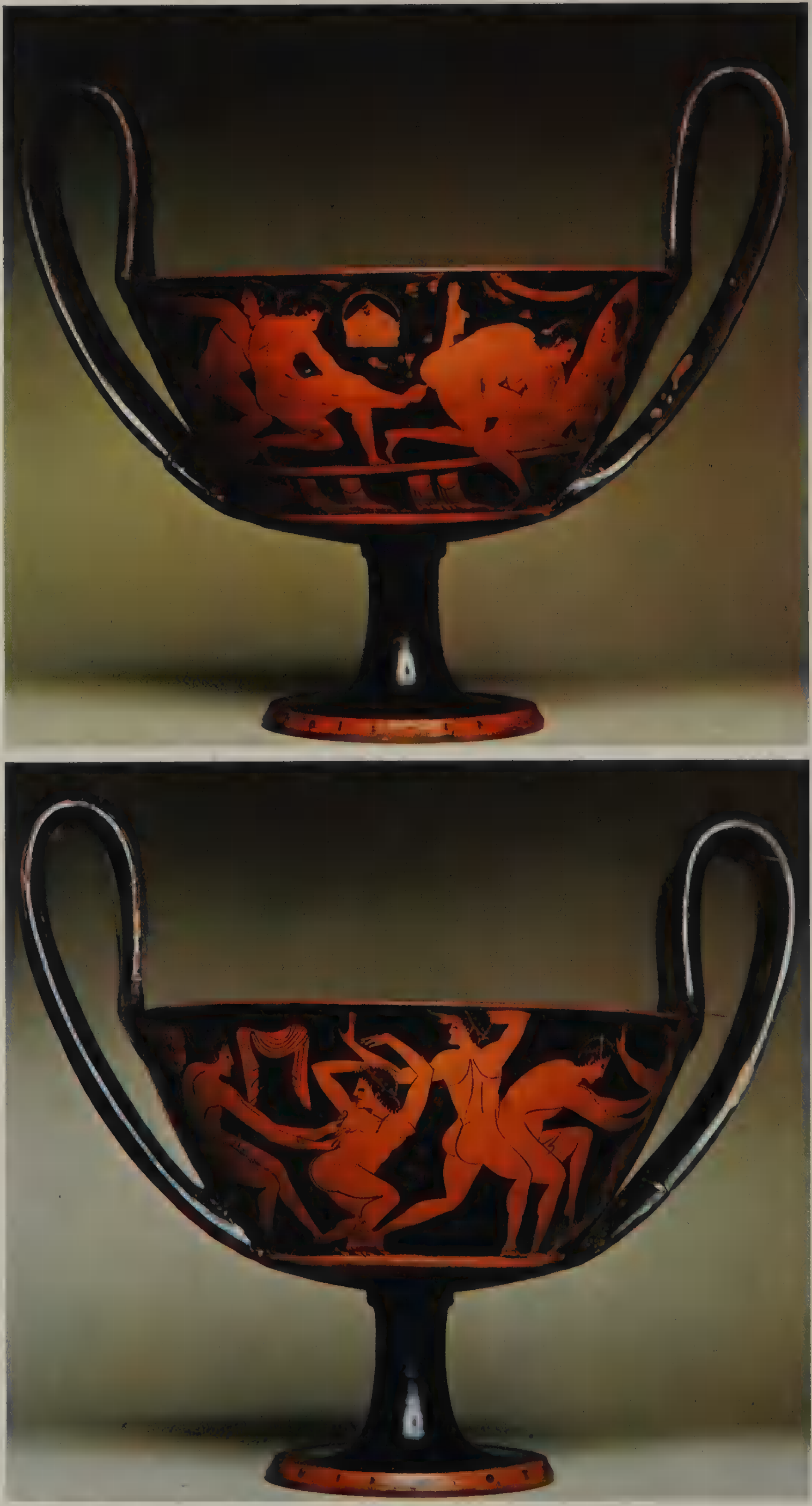




MAN AND WOMAN – SATYR AND MAENAD
Attic black-figure *pelike* by the Acheloos Painter.
Late sixth century B.C.
London: British Museum (W 40).
H. 0.325 m



APHRODITE (?)
Bronze mirror, from Hermione in Argolis.
Second half of sixth century B.C.
Munich: Antikensammlungen (3482). H. 0.33 m



CUP WITH EROTIC SCENES
Attic red-figure *kantharos* by the Nikosthenes Painter.
Late sixth century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts (95.61). H. 0.24 m

• APHRODITE (?)

The representation of a goddess naked is neither an achievement nor an innovation of fourth-century art. Images of naked goddesses on terracottas and ivories, usually discovered in the votive deposits of great sanctuaries, go back long before the *Aphrodite Cnidia* of Praxiteles; the oldest dates from the eighth century. The precedents for such representations are easily traced in the religious world of the Near East, in Syria, where the Great Mother, Astarte, the goddess of fertility, in equal degree chthonic and Olympian, was represented naked.

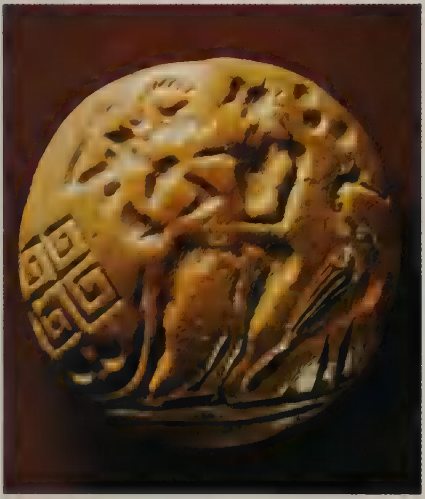
With rare exceptions representations of the goddess in the nude disappear in Greece in the seventh century B.C. and re-appear only diffidently in the fourth. But such is not the case everywhere and bronze mirrors with their handles shaped as a naked woman standing on a crouching lion and with a siren at either side, continued to be made in Laconia in the second half of the sixth century. Albeit of different quality and with some variation in the design, such mirrors have been found not only in Greece but in Sicily and Spain, an indication, we believe, of just how far the Oriental (particularly Syrian) cult had spread. In Greece the goddess Astarte, depicted in ritual nakedness, became identified with Aphrodite. It was perhaps due to Eastern influence that in some of the most famous temples of Aphrodite, as on Acrocorinth and at Locri Epizephyri, we have accounts of sacred prostitution, a strange survival of an ancient custom which had been almost totally eliminated from Greek religion.

We know that the small bronze shown here depicts Aphrodite and not an ordinary mortal from the lion on which she stands, a symbol of the power deriving from her title as 'Mistress of Animals'. The sirens beside her are a reference to the worship paid to Aphrodite as a chthonic divinity, also a 'Mistress of the Underworld'. In other words, Aphrodite is represented as the Great Mother, the Phoenician Astarte, the goddess who presides over Birth and Death, the powerful mistress of Heaven and Earth to whom animals and men are subject, depending on her for their life and fertility.

Perhaps it is to the cult of Aphrodite as Mistress of the Underworld that we owe the wide distribution of these mirrors, which were generally placed in tombs as though to watch over the sleep of the dead. A little marble statue from the Greek Islands dating from the second half of the sixth century and representing a naked goddess has been found in a small sanctuary in a necropolis near Orvieto in Etruria. This shows that there must certainly have been religious images in which the Goddess of the Underworld was shown naked.

There is one last observation to be made and that is the uncertain hand of early Greek artists when representing female nudity. It has often been remarked that these slim, sinuous bodies have, apart from the obvious attributes, the shape rather of the male than of the female form.

GEM WITH EROTIC GROUP
Lentoid in burnt steatite, from Melos.
Late seventh century B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (D. 110).
W. 0.037 m



• CUP WITH EROTIC SCENES

The creator of this *kantharos* is Nikosthenes, a great potter of the late sixth century B.C. to whom we owe some novel and elegant vase shapes. But the beauty of this *kantharos* is not matched by the composition of the painting. Not that it is ugly, but it barely suits the form of the vase. For example, the horizontal line of the edge of the couch and the space beneath it, occupied by a basin and two pairs of boots, both spoil the balance of the elegant flaring walls of the vase. On the other hand we may applaud the remarkable vivacity of the scene and the attempt to present new figurative schemes with foreshortening effects.

The vase was painted by the Nikosthenes Painter, a mediocre artist not to be confused with the artist of similar title who painted black-figure vases and who, to distinguish him, is called Painter N(ikosthenes). Our painter's work is not generally of very high quality and his most important piece is a cup in the British Museum depicting the Death of Sarpedon, which is unique among his works for the artistic level it achieves. The artificial phalli represented on the *kantharos* might be referred to the cult of Dionysos, and it is no surprise to find them on an Attic vase as a symbolic reminder of fertility rites.

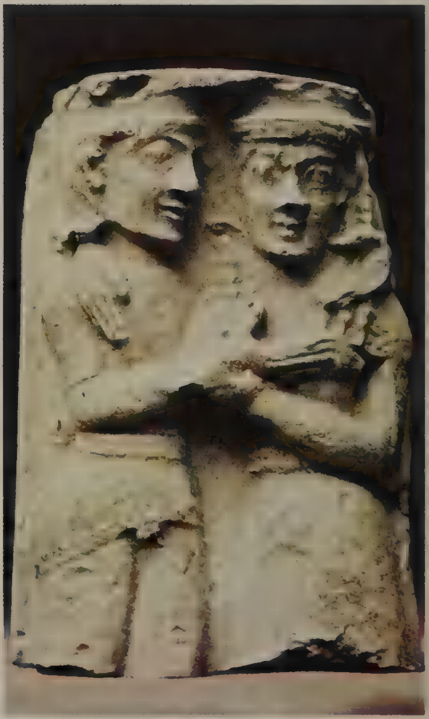
THE KISS
Attic red-figure cup by the Kiss Painter, from Corinth.
Late sixth century B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (2269).
Diam. 0.285 m

▪ GEM WITH EROTIC GROUP

This steatite lentoid shows one of the earliest scenes of love-making in the Greek world. Beside the couple there is a swastika on the right and a swan (?) on the left. From what we can see it is not possible to say whether the work refers to a myth or is a conventional scene. The swan does not necessarily refer to the love affair between Zeus and Leda. Note that in almost all pictures of sexual intercourse on gems and seals the position is nearly always the same, from behind. On this gem, less conformist, the man is drawing the woman towards him with his left arm and she is turning to look at him. The work can be assigned to the last quarter of the seventh century B.C. It comes from Melos, in the Doric area, but culturally more closely linked to the insular Ionic. As far as its shape is concerned the source of inspiration was Crete, an island that during the Bronze Age had produced jewels of extraordinary artistic quality. The seventh-century artist is copying the old shape, with a new Greek subject.

In the lesser arts the formal schemata, created a century before for the representation of the human form in bronze and clay, were still being used at the end of the seventh century. The small figures are slim and geometricised; a triangle was enough to represent the human torso and the muscles of the legs were hardly shown. Yet by the end of the century a supple monumentality was coming more and more into vogue. The most important examples of this are the monumental marble *kouroi*, of which the earliest complete example is the well-known statue from Attica, now in New York.

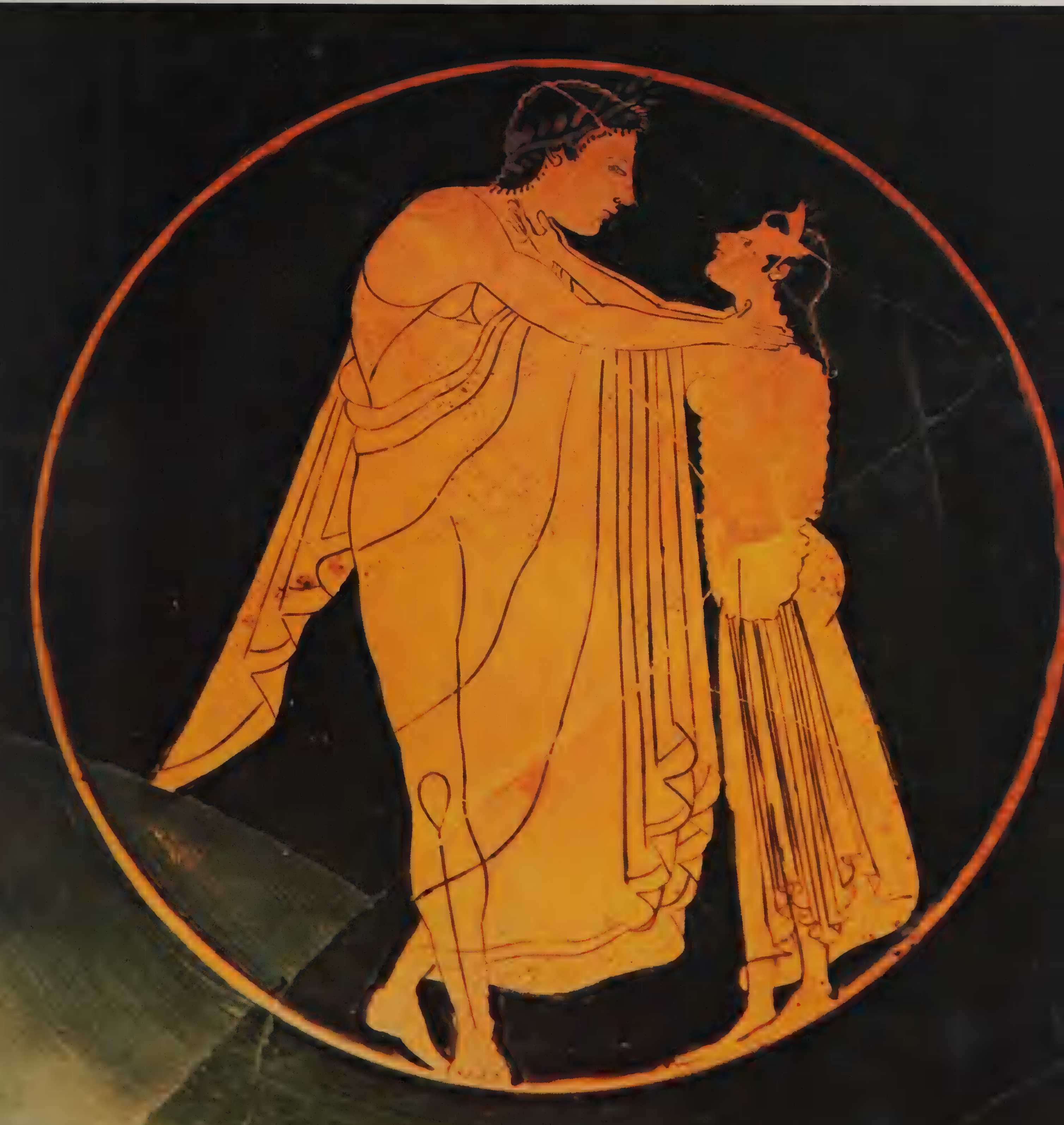
SACRED MARRIAGE
Terracotta from Metapontum.
Late seventh century B.C.
Metapontum Museum.

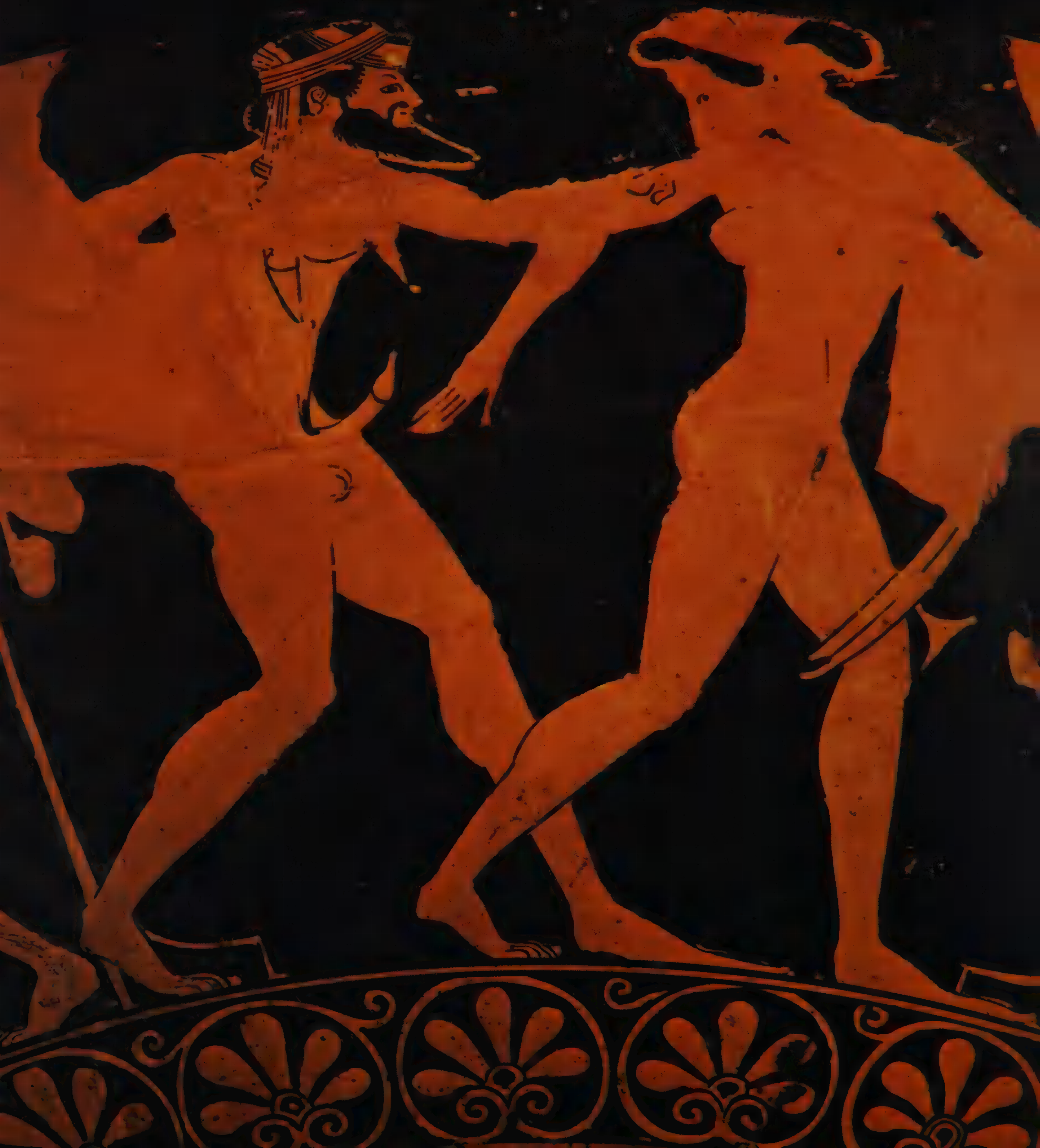


▪ SACRED MARRIAGE

The most recent archaeological research tells us that, in a complicated pattern of commercial and cultural exchange, contact between Greece and the East went back at least as far as the second millennium B.C. Minoan vases, made in Crete, have been found along the Turkish coasts and in the near-by Greek islands, at Iasos, for example, and on Kos. Minoan and Mycenaean vases have been found on the site of the ancient Ugarit on the Syrian coast. In the same way the discovery of what are clearly Euboean and Cycladic Geometric vases of the eighth century at Al Mina and Tell Halaf shows that contact did not completely cease, even in the period of change from the Mycenaean to the Geometric, the Dark Ages of Greek history, but was ultimately resumed.

By the seventh century the Eastern goddess Astarte had already become identified in Greece with various goddesses of the Greek pantheon, originally never represented as virgin girls. At Gortyn on the island of Crete she was Athena; at Axos, also in Crete, she was Aphrodite; on Samos, Hera. A plaque from the sanctuary of Hera on Samos shows the pair in a *hierogamia* or Sacred





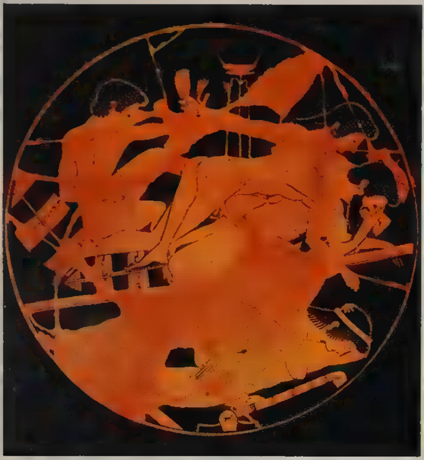
Marriage. Both are naked and the god is caressing his bride's cheek as he draws her towards him. On another plaque, from Ithaca, the scene is even more explicit and they are making love. There was, it should be said, nothing profane in such representations. Sexual union between the gods was the symbol of the continuity of life, a promise of fertility for the earth: it was in fact a sacred act.

This plaque belongs to the same series of scenes. It was found in the sanctuary of Apollo Lykios at Metapontum, in south Italy, and although it was probably made locally it is partly inspired by the Cretan type. Here the divinities are clothed. The plaque belongs to a phase known as Sub-Daedalic, of the end of the seventh century B.C.

▪ THE KISS *page 89*

In the scene on the inside of the cup a youth and a girl in a long dress approach to kiss. Both wear garlands. There is often a more calm and moderate scene on the inside of Attic cups, in contrast to the orgiastic and unbridled action depicted on the outside. This cup is not the work of a great artist, but there is a naïve beauty and tenderness in the kiss, the girl leaning towards the youth with her head bent back.

The Kiss Painter is a follower of Oltos, one of the greatest painters of red-figure cups of the early period of the style. But, as often happens, the pupil lacks the master's command and expression. His images seem cold by comparison, though they are neat and carefully executed, notably on a cup now in New York with the same subject as this.



MEN AND HETAERAE
Attic red-figure cup by the Thalia Painter, from Vulci.
Late sixth century B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (3251).
Diam. 0.375 m

▪ MEN AND HETAERAE

The scene on the inside of this cup is not easy to understand because the artist, in grappling with a rather complex picture, has had to try and solve problems of perspective which were not yet within the grasp of the Attic vase-painters of the turn of the sixth and fifth centuries. The taste for analytical patterns, all expressed in line and therefore not disturbed by considerations of space and three dimensions, compelled the artist to compose his figure all in one plane. The *kline* (couch) becomes a horizontal bar on which the bodies and the cushions are disposed with great care in composition but in an altogether unnatural manner.

The hetaera encircles the body of her companion with her left arm and right leg. She is striking him with the sandal in her right hand. The man has his left leg bent, his knee leaning against the thigh of the hetaera; his toes can just be seen under the cushion. On the left of the couple a youth is masturbating as he watches the scene. Under the *kline* a hetaera is sleepily occupied in the same way, shown from the front according to the artistic conventions of the time. Behind the couple is a lamp with two wicks. On the outside of the cup is depicted a lively nocturnal scene of lovers' catch-as-catch-can lighted by lamps, with hetaerae, youths and bearded men. A curious characteristic of the scene is that, instead of their usual garlands, the youths wear little caps similar to those of the hetaerae, who also have their curls hanging down on to their necks. Some of the hetaerae are dancing to the sound of clappers (*krotala*). Within the cup is the inscription 'Leagros is beautiful'. The name of the sleeping hetaera was written beside her but has now almost totally disappeared. She is Smikra, a well-known hetaera of the period of Leagros and known to us also from an inscription on a wine cooler now in Leningrad, the work of

Euphronios, in which she herself declares that if he wins at the game of *kottabos* she will have Leagros as her partner at the banquet.

By a strange trick of fate Leagros, who was later a general and politician, is now known to us almost exclusively for his beauty, recorded in numerous inscriptions on Attic vases of the last quarter of the sixth century. Themistocles, who beat the Persians at Salamis, was his friend, though his senior, and Leagros was a member of the exclusive and refined Athenian aristocracy. In the year 465/4 B.C. he was one of the generals who led 10,000 Attic settlers to the island of Thasos. But during an incursion into Thracian territory the group was totally annihilated and Leagros himself died. The fallen were buried at the expense of the State.

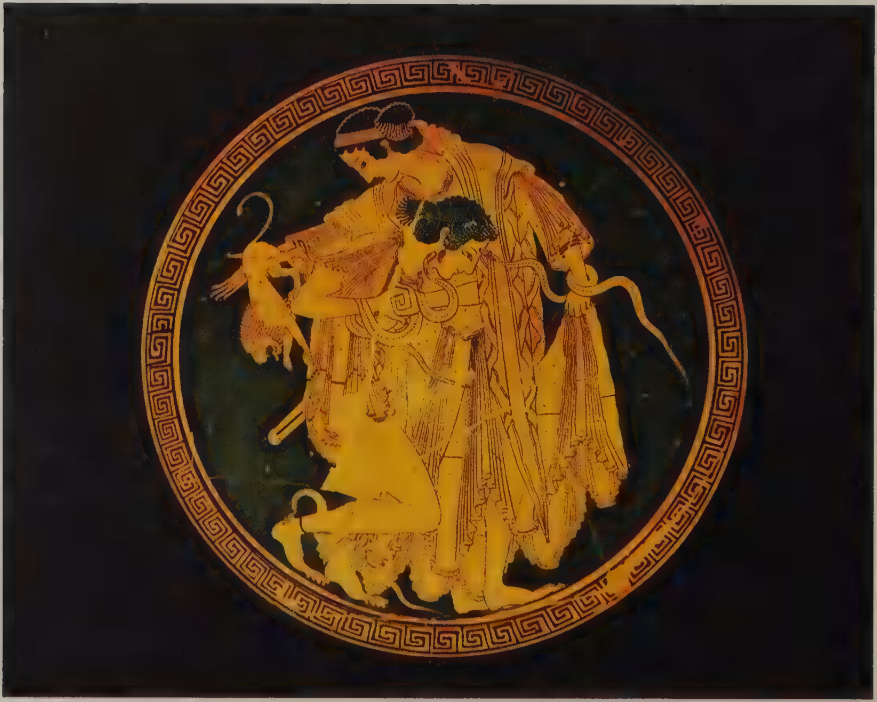
The painter takes his name from one of the hetaerae depicted on the outside of the cup.

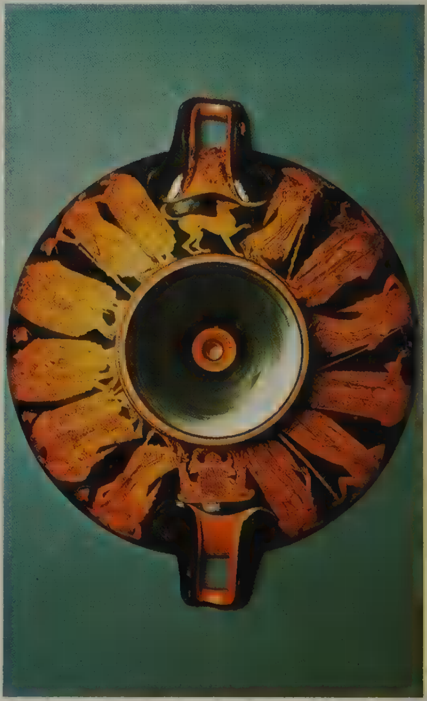
• PELEUS AND THETIS – LOVERS

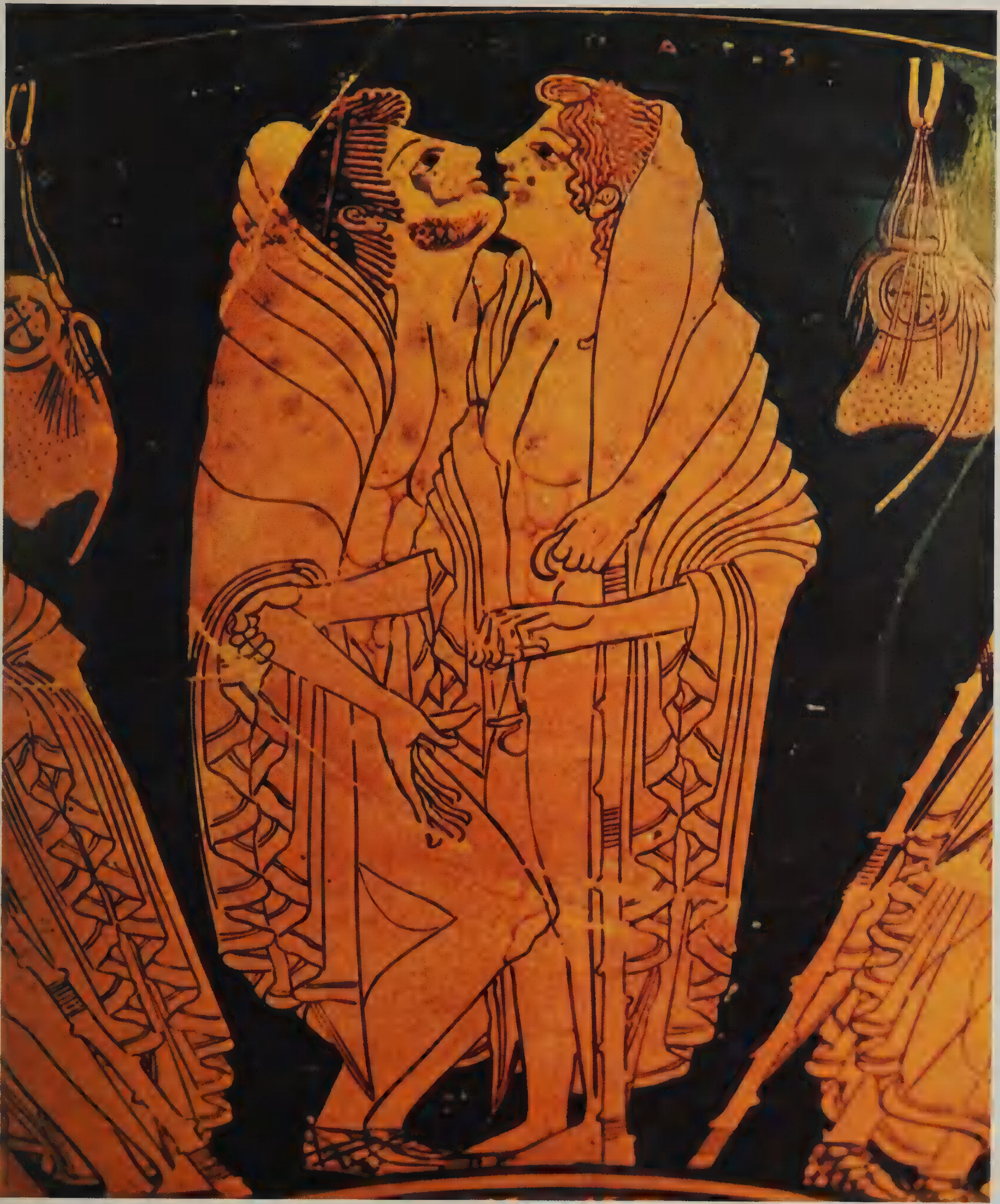
We are in the rare and fortunate position of knowing the name of the man who painted this fine cup. As well as inscribing the usual exclamation about the beauty of a youth, in this case Athenodotos, he has also written the names of the characters depicted, Peleus and Thetis, and his own name, Peithinos.

There are two, apparently contradictory, legends about the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, from whose union Achilles was born. According to the first, Thetis was given as a bride to Peleus by the gods themselves, who all attended the magnificent wedding, sometimes depicted on vases. According to another legend Peleus took Thetis by force in the presence of the Nereids, her sisters, who fled in terror. Thetis attempts to resist her fate and, in the pictures on vases, animals and sea-creatures run to her aid; in other versions it is the goddess herself who becomes a sea-creature and struggles against Peleus.

PELEUS AND THETIS—LOVERS
Red-figure cup by Peithinos, from Vulci.
Late sixth century B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (2279).
Diam. 0.34 m; H. 0.125 m





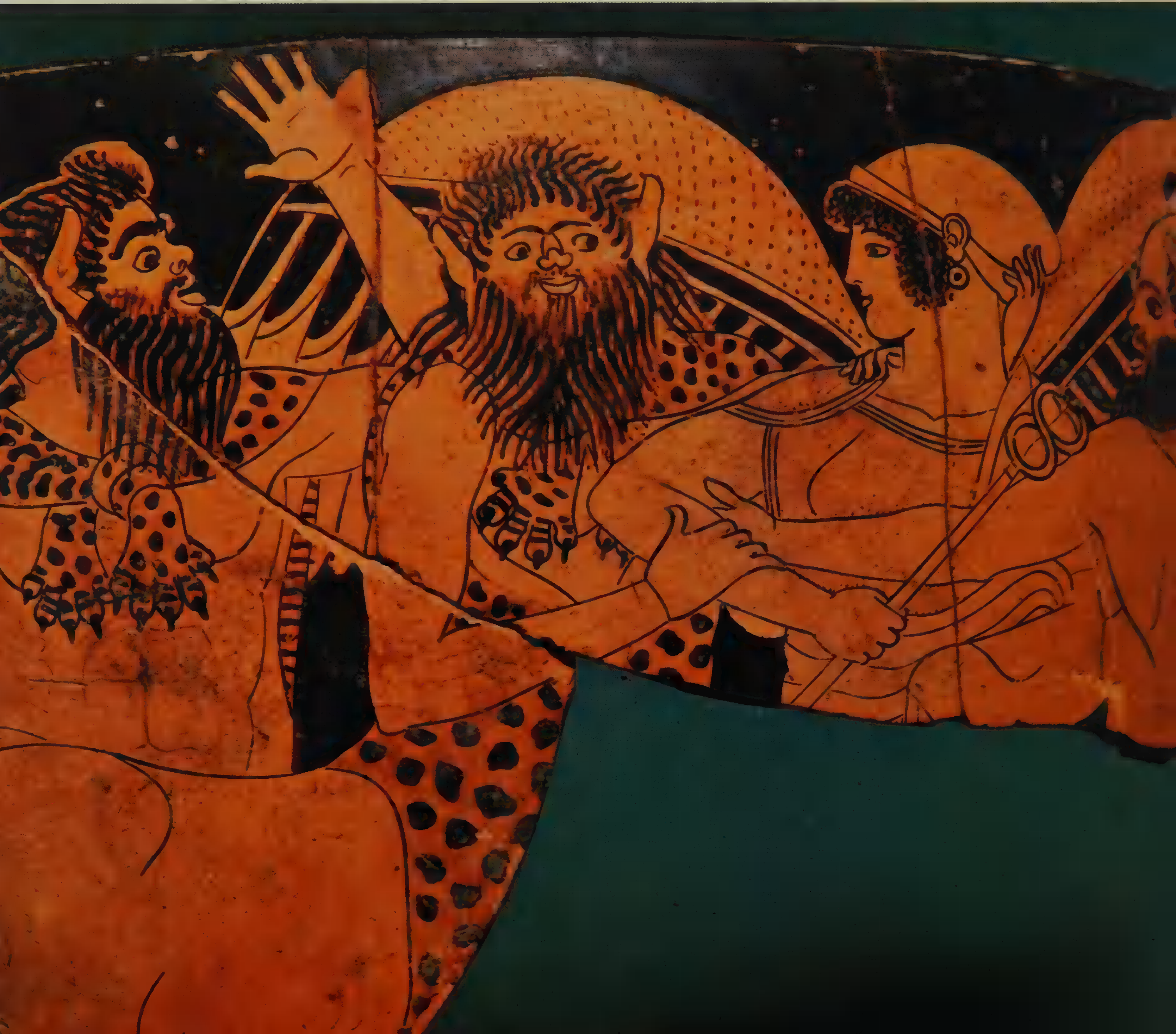


In the scene depicted by Peithinos each element is fixed in forms of pure and crystalline elegance. No trace remains of the violence of the rape: the images are composed like steps in a dance. The artist's interest is concentrated entirely on the careful and limpid composition of line, from the transparent robes to the arrangement of the hair. The harsh vitality and robust monumentality of Euphronios, who worked at the same period, are completely absent.

The same is the case with the picture on the outside of the cup. On one side lovers and beloved embrace each other without passion: a young boy offers an apple, the symbol of love, to his companion. On the other side a woman offers a flower to a youth, while another delicately fingers the edge of her robe.

This artist can be considered one of the most gifted exponents of Archaic Greek art in its prime. The expressive power of vase painting has been subordinated to interest in a sophisticated calligraphic game, certainly very

IRIS ASSAULTED BY CENTAURS
Fragment of an Attic red-figure *skyphos* by the Kleophrades Painter.
c. 480 B.C.
Florence: Archaeological Museum (4218).



beautiful but lacking much potential for development. It is possible that Peithinos was the same person as the Thalia Painter, the latter's work being slightly earlier.

▪ IRIS ASSAULTED BY CENTAURS

This is a later work of the Kleophrades Painter and is iconographically rather unusual. Iris, the messenger of the gods, is assaulted by centaurs, and not by satyrs as is shown in other scenes on vases. That the artist had a preference for centaurs is shown by a number of vases that he painted where these half-animal creatures are depicted with uncommon verve and richness of movement. On this *skyphos* Iris does not appear in the least afraid, though her wings are spread to take off, and the centaurs have an artful air about them which automatically brings to mind the world of the Athenian satyr play, in which the dramatic tension is continually perverted by the insertion of comic effects, with the entry of satyrs, the impudent and cowardly troupe of Dionysos, always ready for trouble but fearful at the least sign of danger. Centaurs, too, may enter the world of Dionysos, but more rarely.

▪ EROTIC GROUPS

We have only fourteen signatures of Brygos followed by the words 'made (this)'. Of these the five most beautiful were painted by a great red-figure artist whom we call the Brygos Painter. He painted principally cups and was unrivalled at composing careful and complex scenes of *komoi* on the limited fields they offered. An enormous vivacity of subject, combined with drawing in soft and flowing lines capable of expressing the bulk of figures and objects, are the principal characteristics of this artist, in contrast with the painters of black figure whose drawings are angular and pointed. What we admire on the cups by the Brygos Painter is the realistic fleshiness of the bodies.

These remarkable gifts, which place him in an artistic ambience already moving out of the Archaic, can also be admired in this cup which is in fact one of the five signed by the potter Brygos. It carries the usual repertory of scenes depicting *komoi* and the love-making of bearded men and hetaerae. But the high stylistic quality and the successful spatial arrangement are undoubtedly new. We find, for example, on side B of the cup, the addition of the dancing man, one leg bent, his arm raised in such a way as to fill the empty space beside the erotic group. This is altogether unusual. In the group itself this is only the second time that we encounter on red-figure Attic vases a rare example of a sadistic relationship: the man is beating the woman with a slipper. Also in a Greek setting, in the famous sculpture group from Delos, Aphrodite has a slipper in her hand and seems to be trying to drive away Pan. The man on the right in the large detail is holding a burning lamp!

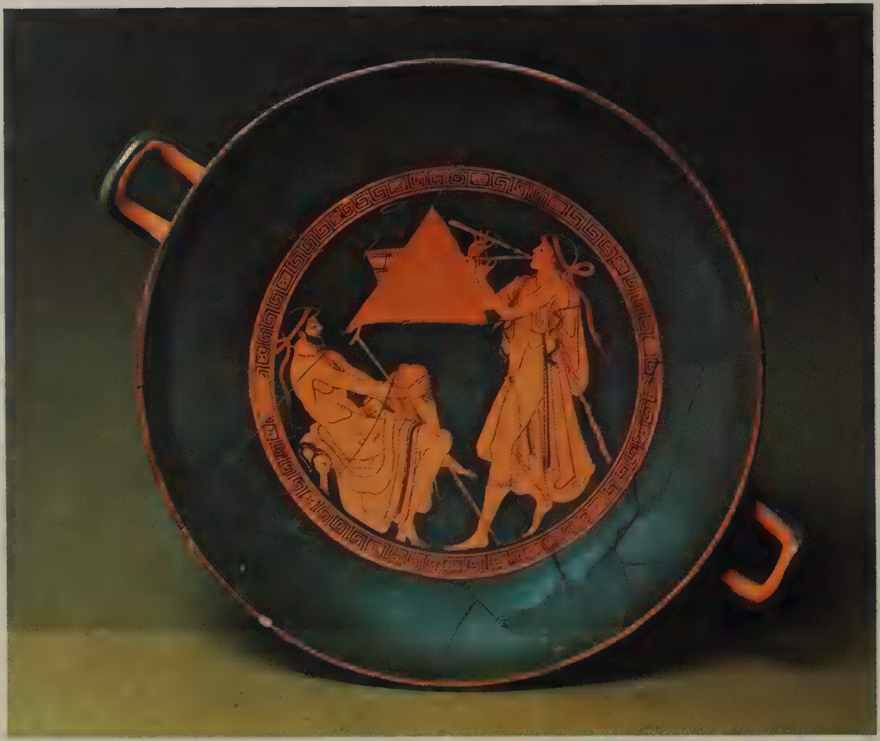
Opposite page and pages 98–9
EROTIC GROUPS
Attic red-figure cup by the Brygos Painter.
c. 480 B.C.
Florence: Archaeological Museum (3921).

• MAN AND PIPES-PLAYER

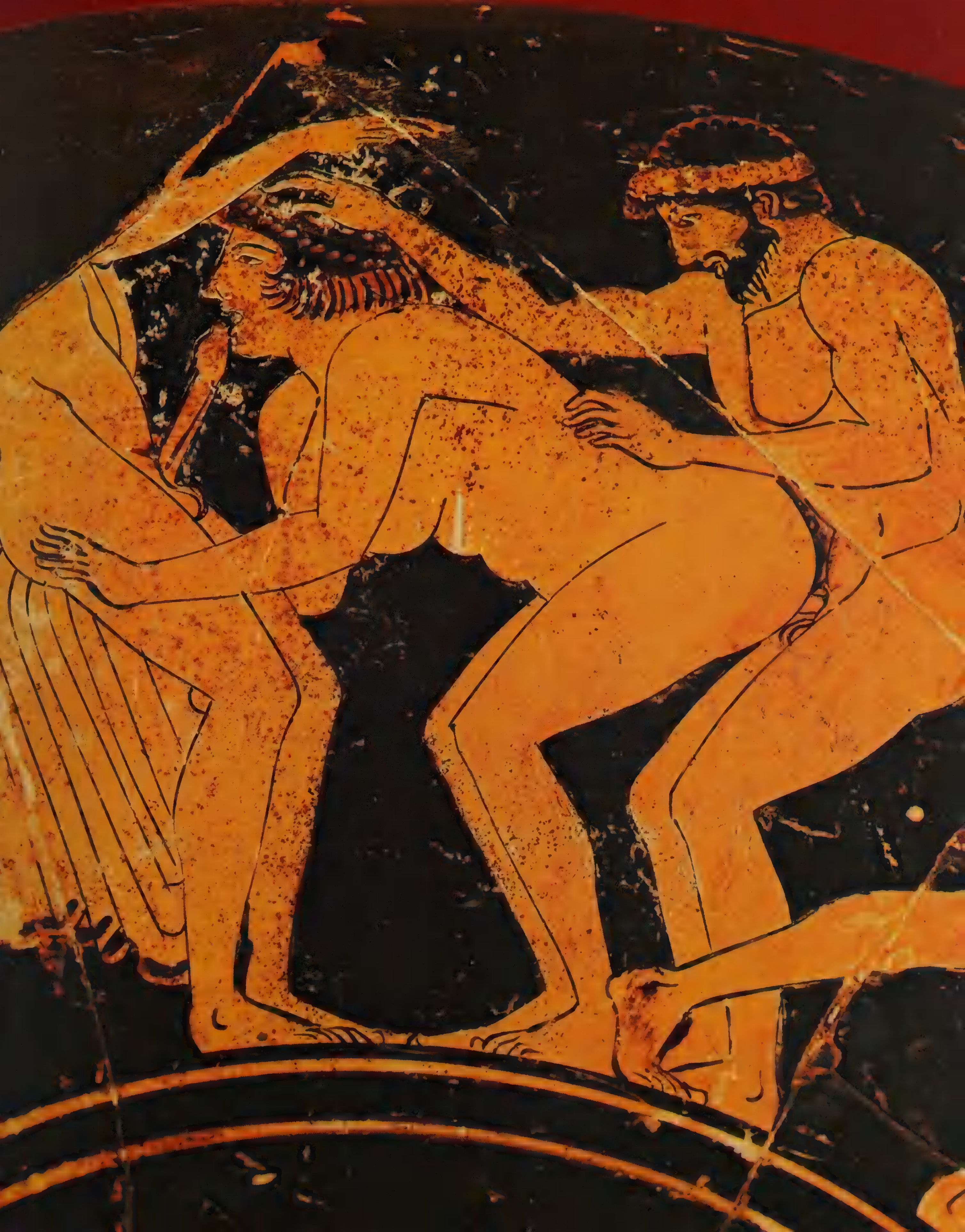
Another work by the Brygos Painter is this splendid interior of a cup which fully expresses the artist's style. There is no longer that insistence on description, common on late sixth-century vases. One need only compare this with the cup by Peithinos to realise the change in artistic values that had taken place in little more than a decade. Here the description is sober, and the delicacy of the outline prefigures the innovations of the major painting of the mid fifth century. The vivacity, still essentially Archaic, of the scenes on the outside of the cups is countered within by a more peaceful composition, almost a moment of rest between two violent periods of activity. This is further proof of the sensitivity of an artist who was also capable of bold dramatic gestures.

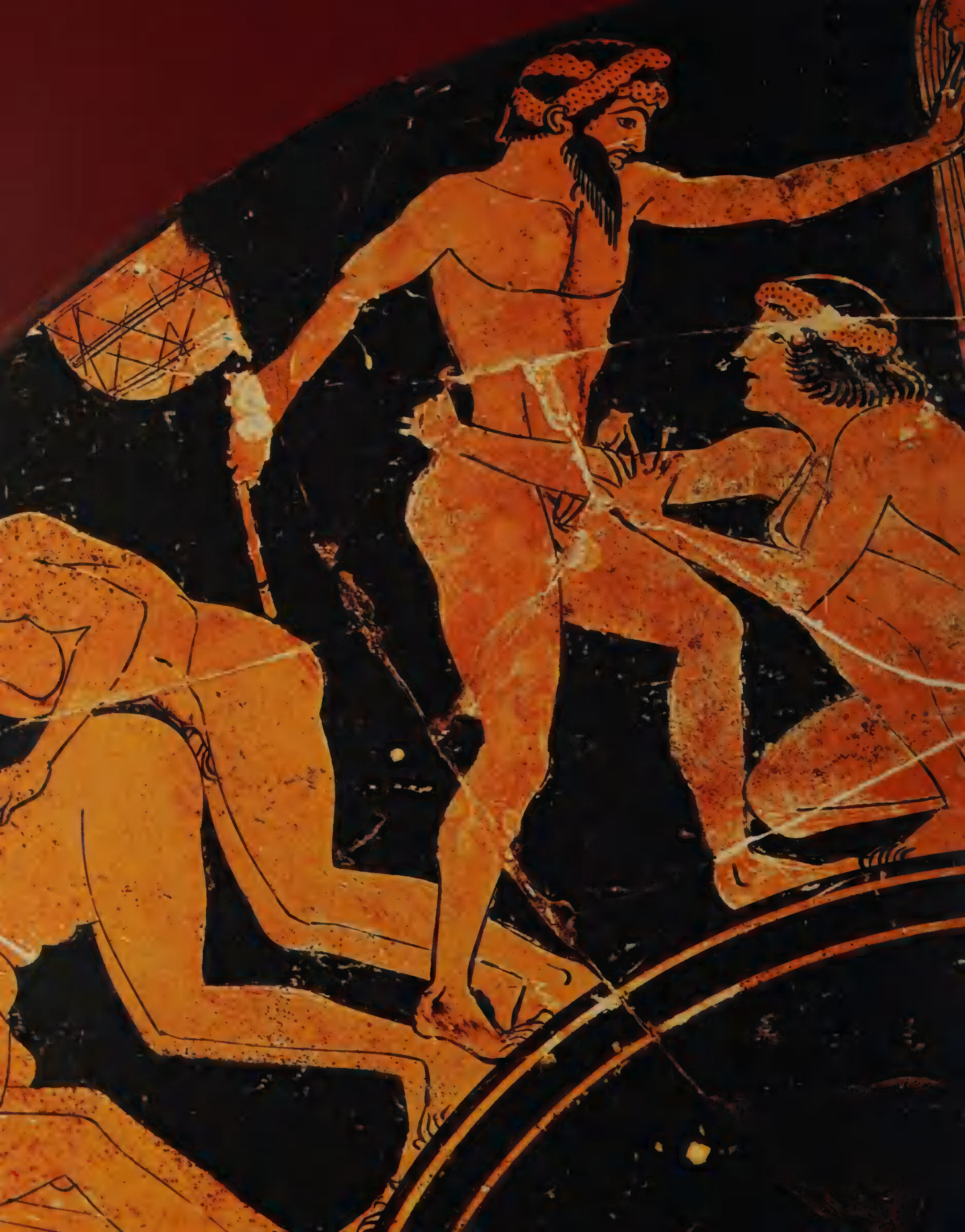
• *KOMOS*

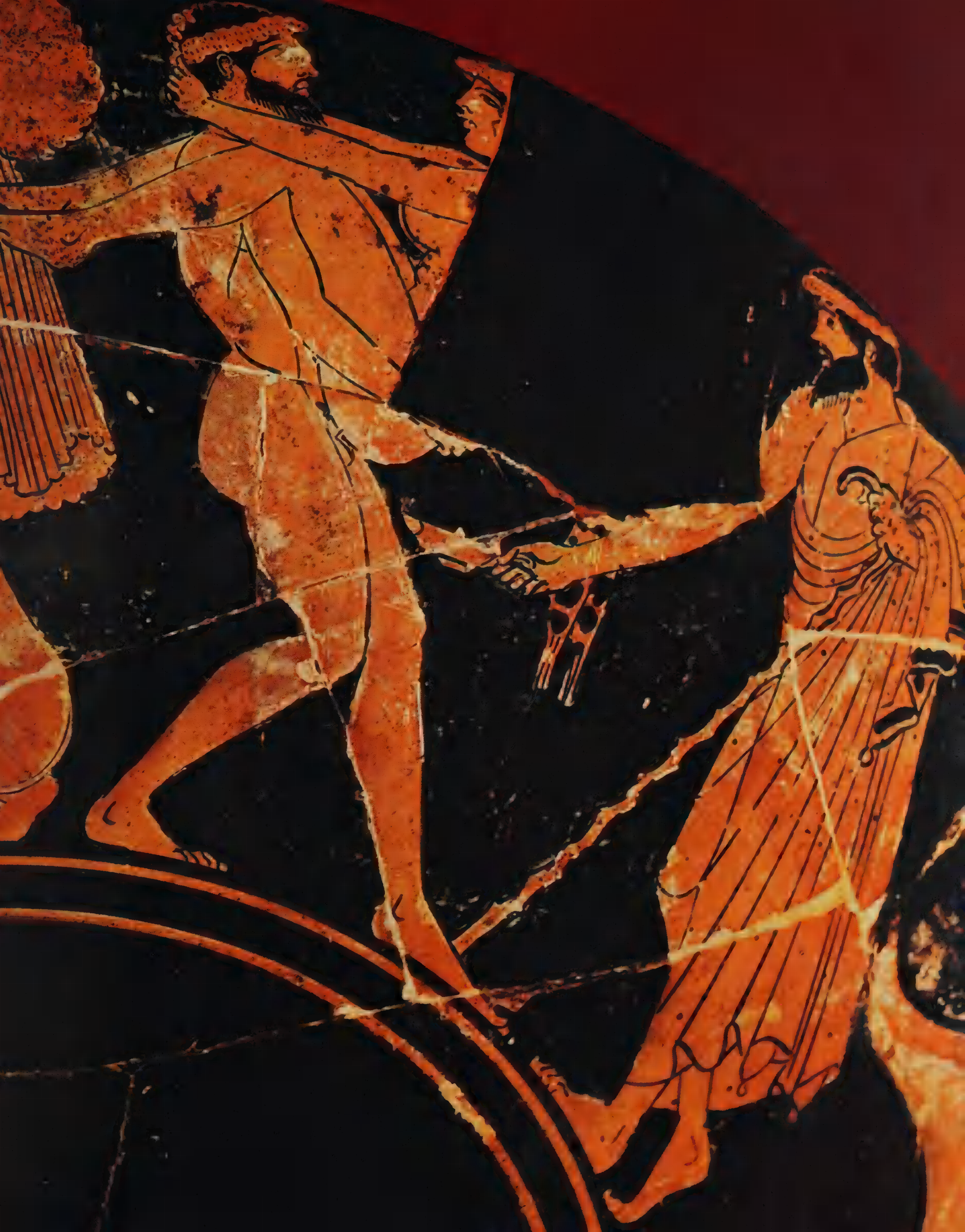
This scene depicts a *komos* with men in cloaks intent on dancing to the sound of pipes. Some of the cloaks are slipping to the ground leaving them naked; they have cups and *skyphoi* in their hands. This is one of the most harmonious of the cups painted by Douris, the painter whose works include the famous cup in the Louvre with Eos supporting the body of her son Memnon, killed by Achilles. He was considered for a long time one of the greatest vase-painters of antiquity, but he has in recent times had to cede his position to the more intense work of the Kleophrades, Brygos, and Berlin Painters, who were his contemporaries. Nevertheless, his fame was deserved for the many neat signatures which he wrote on his finest works. In the prolific and uneven production of this artist, various phases of activity can be distinguished from youth, when his painting is in sharp and angular lines in the tradition of the painters of the late sixth century, to maturity, at the time of transition to the Severe Style, when his own



MAN AND PIPES-PLAYER
Attic red-figure cup by the Brygos Painter.
c. 480 B.C.
London: British Museum (95.5–13.1).







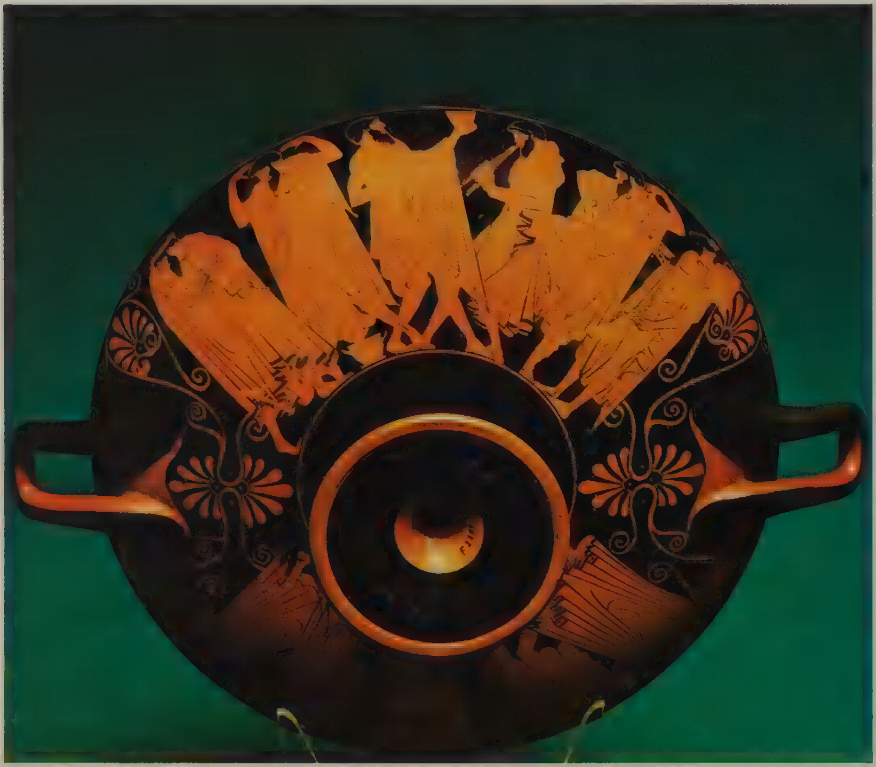
style became more thoughtful, its lines soft and evocative of solid plastic volume. This cup is of the later period: it is similar to the works of the Brygos Painter and can be dated shortly after 480 B.C.

Symposia were essentially an aristocratic habit. This is shown not only by the names of the handsome youths inscribed on the vases – always members of the Athenian aristocracy – but also by the spirit of the symposia. While they did not often reach the high level of the banquets in which Socrates took part they were ideal convivial occasions. Between music and dancing, abundant drinking and games of love, political and cultural problems might be discussed; the ties of friendship formed there were the basis of future activity in the city-state. Obviously this was only possible for a tiny minority, and poorer folk were strangers to this world. On the other hand, homosexuality, too, was essentially an aristocratic preserve; it was not likely to be widespread in proletarian circles where relations between the sexes were on a different footing.

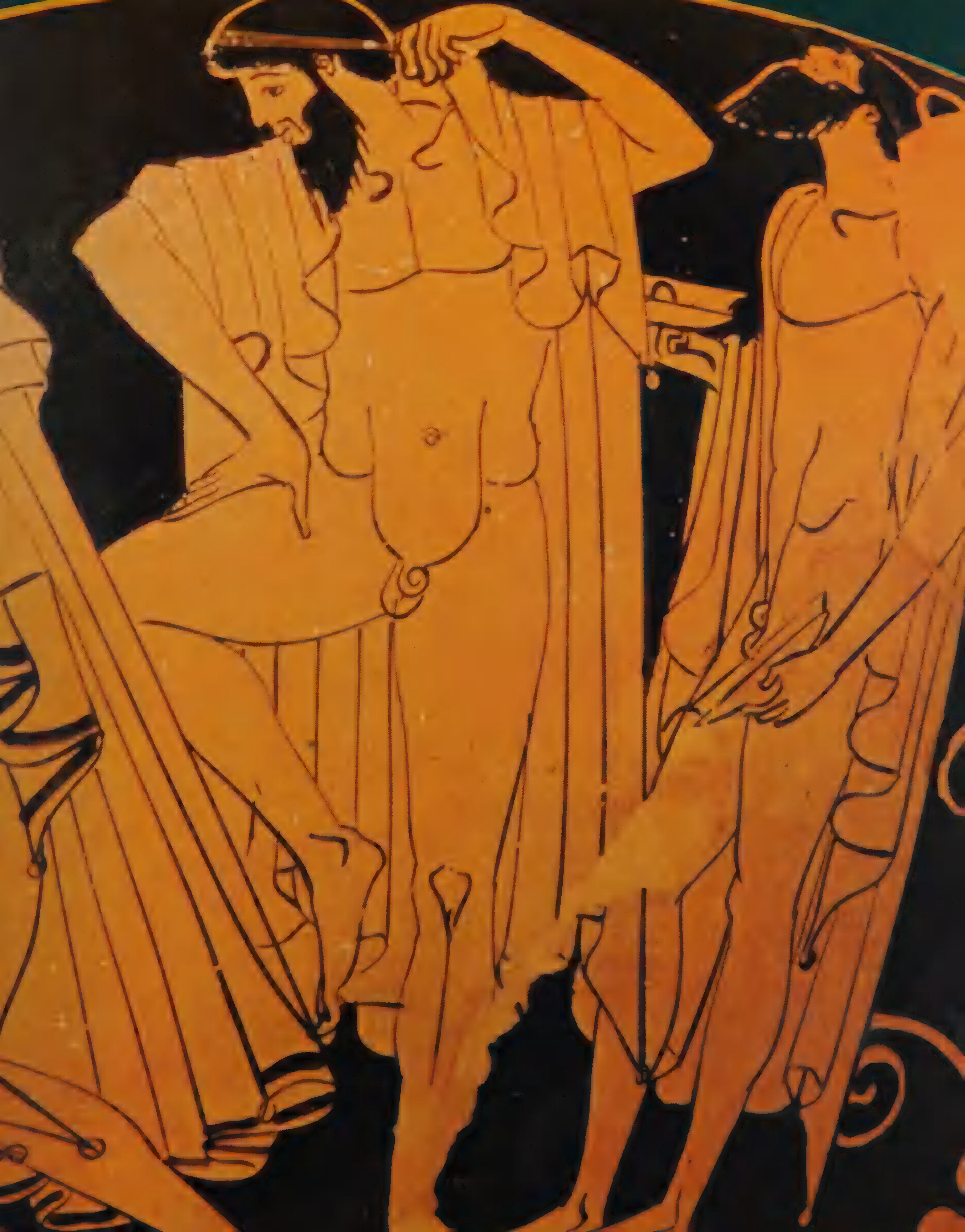
▪ ZEPHYROS AND HYAKINTHOS – CUPS BY DOURIS

Two cups in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston show a similar and, from various points of view, rather obscure scene. On the complete cup, signed by Douris, a tall figure hovering in the air has caught up a youth and is holding him tightly. The best presentation is that with the figures disposed as in the photograph, horizontally. On the fragmentary cup the subject is the same, but rather more daring and there is no doubt as to the connection between the two characters. In this fragment the figures must be seen vertically.

But what does the scene depict? According to some, the rape of Hyakinthos



Left and opposite page
KOMOS
Attic red-figure cup by Douris,
from Vulci.
480–470 B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (2289).
Diam. 0.33 m



by Zephyros. Others prefer to see the winged figure as Eros, the youth a mortal. However, the picture would be most unusual if it referred to Eros, though there do exist on Attic vases scenes of the god following young men.

The subject seems better explained by the myth of Hyakinthos. Originally a divinity in his own right, he was later identified with Apollo, with whom he was venerated at Amyklae, not far from Sparta. Probably as an attempt to explain the epithet of Apollo-Hyakinthos he was taken for a young man loved by Apollo. The legend of the tragic death of Hyakinthos, killed in error by a discus thrown by Apollo during the games, was regarded as a symbol of the death of vegetation scorched by the rays of the Sun. The relationship of Zephyros and Hyakinthos can also be explained symbolically: Zephyros is the gentle spring wind that brings back the fine weather, and this provides the obvious connection with Hyakinthos.

- BANQUET SCENE – FRESCO *pages 102–5*

The discovery at Paestum, in Central Italy, of a small painted tomb of the fifth century B.C. aroused great excitement. A painted tomb of this date had never before been found outside the area of direct Greek influence and it was natural that there were hopes of finding echoes of the great Greek paintings which have irretrievably disappeared. But early enthusiasm was quickly succeeded by dispute for the obvious reason that the tomb at Paestum was after all an *unicum* with little positive to teach on this score.

With regard to the general iconography and the subject the banquet scenes are similar to those depicted on red-figure vases in the first quarter of the fifth century. From the anatomical rendering of the figures certain links can be established with the works of the Brygos Painter, the great Attic artist who flourished in the very first decades of the century. The diver on the slabs at the top of the tomb has no counterpart. A suggestion which has won some support sees in the man a symbolic image of the deceased diving from the Pillars of Herakles, a vague limit denoting the ends of the earth, into the waters of the Ocean, the frontier between Life and Death.

In the *Tomb of Hunting and Fishing* at Tarquinia in Etruria, dating from before the end of the sixth century, young people are also represented diving into the waters, but in that case the scene is part of a realistic account of the sporting activities of the Etruscan aristocracy and there is no immediate symbolic reference to the afterlife, apart from the idea common in Etruscan society, though not in Greek, that after death men would continue to take pleasure in the same things they had enjoyed during life.

There is also in the painting of the *Tomb of the Diver* a tendency quite new, compared with contemporary Attic vases, to characterise the figures with accents of a lively and tasteful expressionism. On the banquet slabs – which are the most beautiful part if one excepts the notable figure of the diver – a man with a short beard, stretched out on a couch, his mouth half-open, his expression filled with desire, is drawing towards him with his right arm a young man playing a lyre; the latter, for his part, has a soft profile and fleshy lips. In front of them on another couch a bearded man is watching with some surprise the scene going on behind him. Such realism in the expressions on the faces was perhaps not foreign to the work of the great Greek painters but that does not necessarily mean that there is any connection. It remains to be remarked, however, that, compared with the paintings in Etruscan tombs, there has been a more deliberate attempt in the *Tomb of the Diver* to render

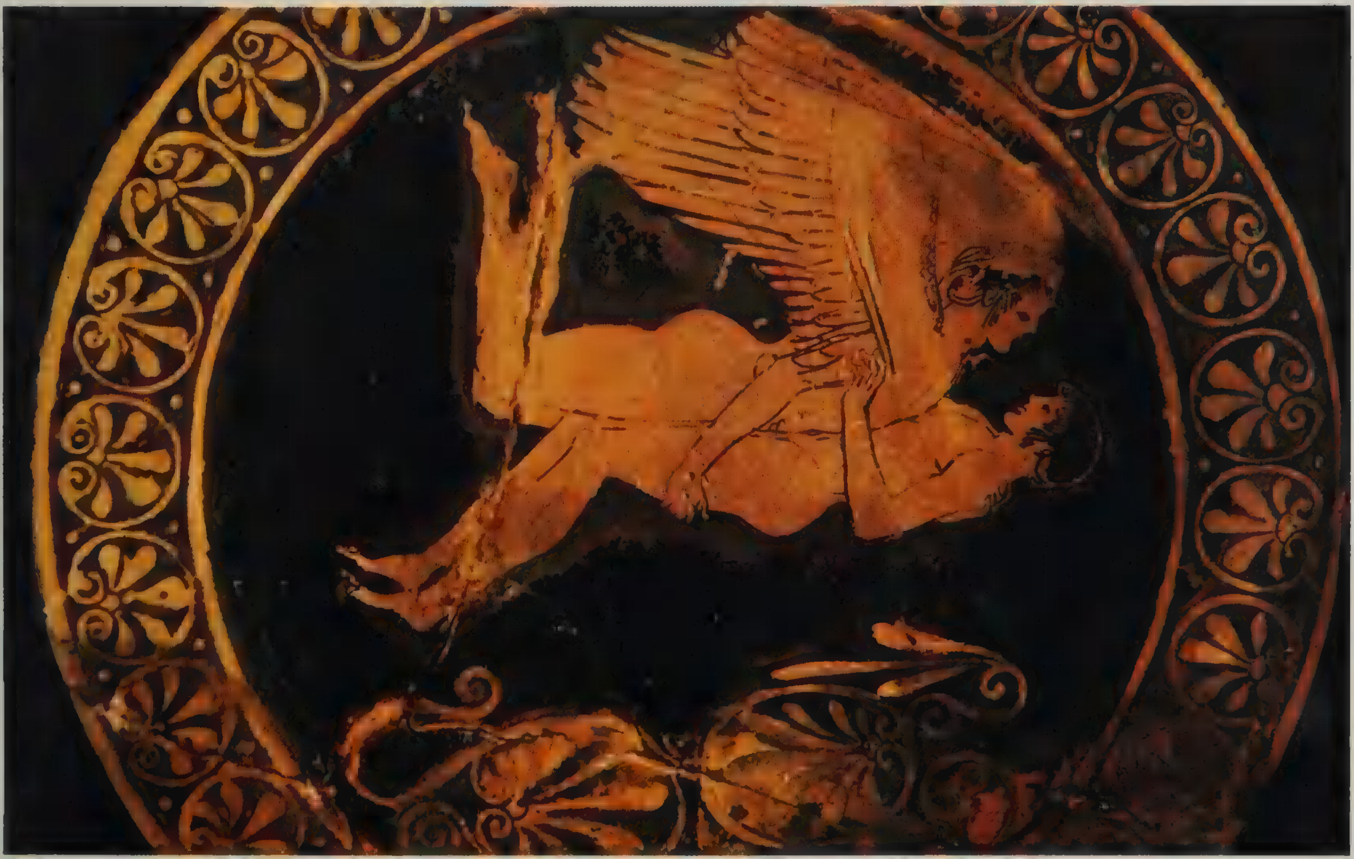
ZEPHYROS AND HYAKINTHOS
Fragment of an Attic red-figure cup by Douris, from Cerveteri.
c. 480 B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (13.94).

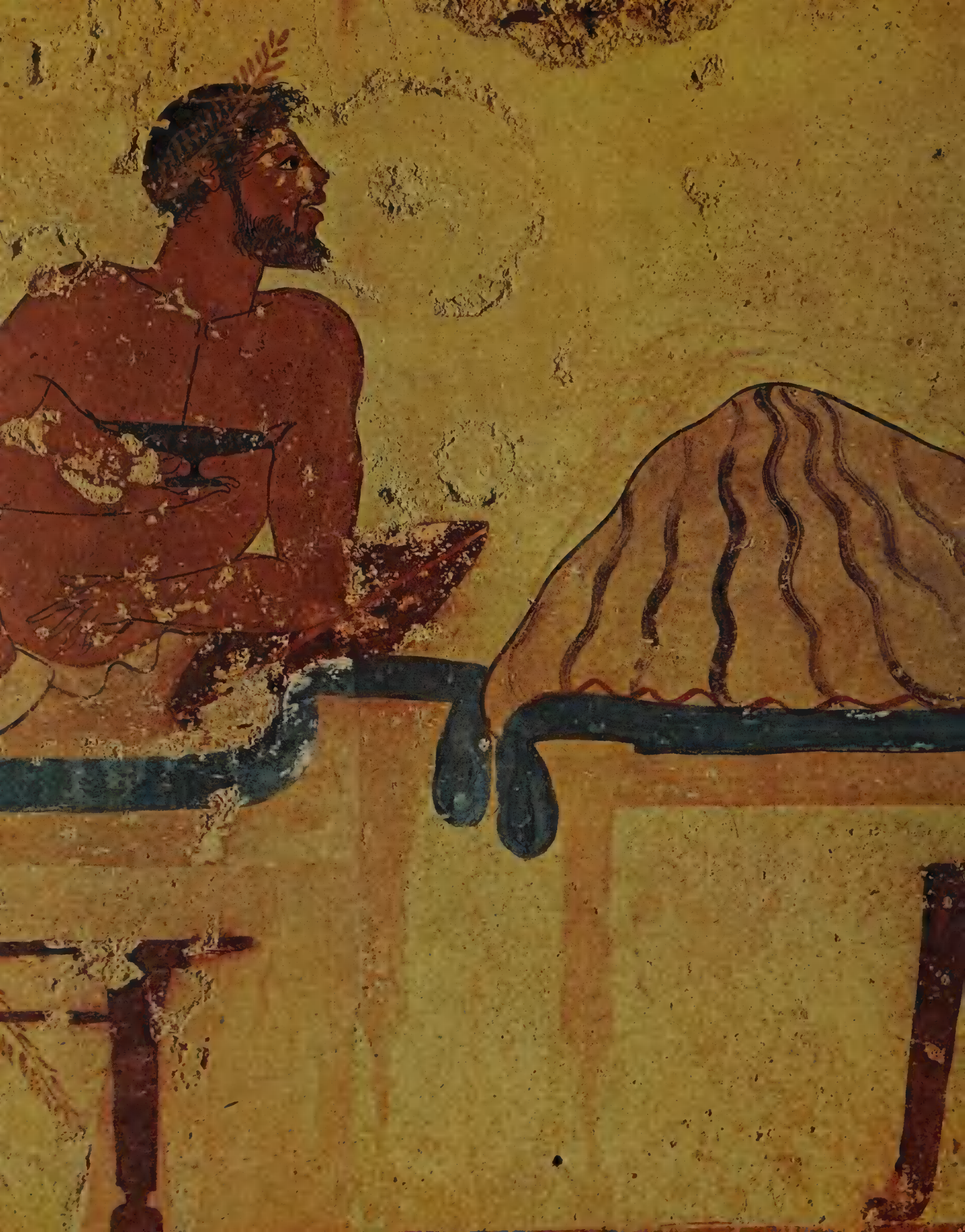
Pages 104–5
BANQUET SCENE
Fresco painting from the *Tomb of the Diver* (detail), from Paestum.
c. 480–470 B.C.
Paestum : Archaeological Museum.

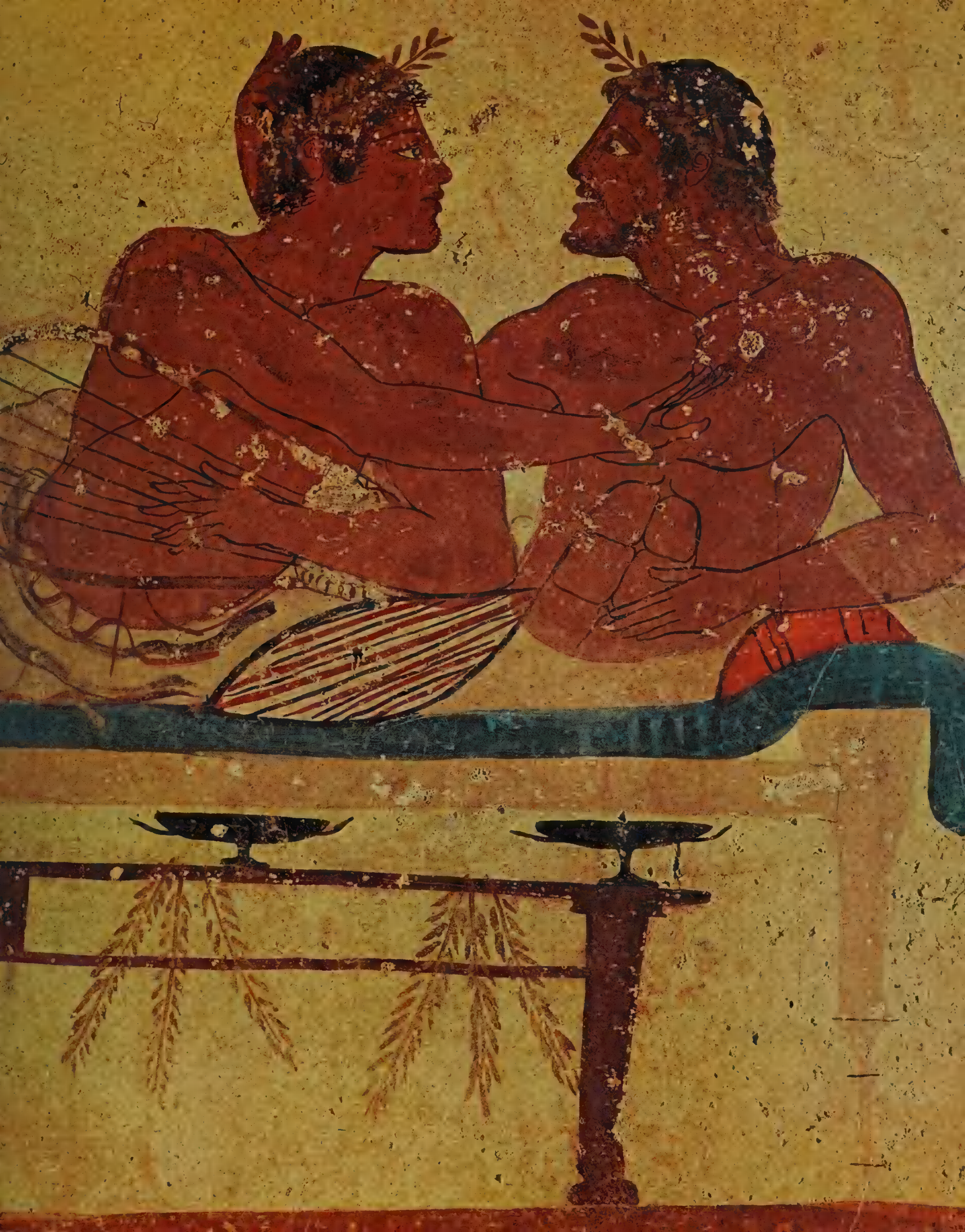
anatomical forms. The bodies are not just portrayed in their outlines but the muscles are suggested as in relief and are finely modelled. Nevertheless, as often happened in areas outside Greece itself, interest in the expressions of the faces demotes interest in the lower part of the body or in rendering it as a unified whole. For this reason the figures reclining on the couches seem to be broken at the waist, their legs summarily placed below their robes.

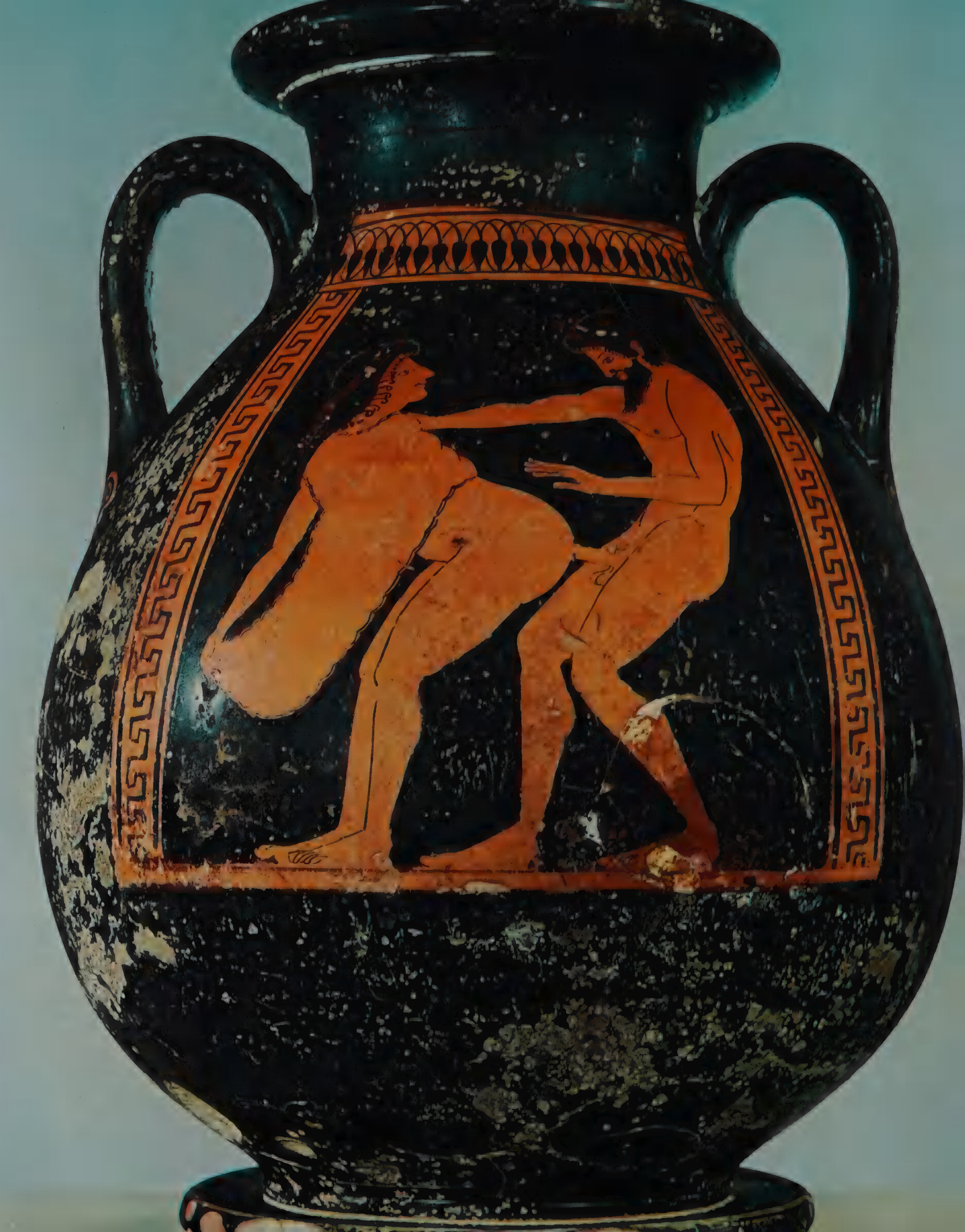
It should be noted that, despite these differences, this tomb, with its more or less clear Pythagorean influences, fits ideologically into a cultural setting that includes Capua and southern Etruria. The very recent discovery of a painted tomb from the beginning of the fifth century at Karaburun in Lycia, on the main frieze of which is depicted a dignitary reclining on a couch, richly dressed and surrounded by servants, brings out again the problems of the relationship between East and West in funerary painting. But the influence of Greece itself is clear, so far as the transmission of iconographic motifs is concerned : compare the Ionic relief from Kos and the extraordinary banquet scene on the pediment of an Archaic temple discovered in 1973 on Corfu.

ZEPHYROS AND HYAKINTHOS
Attic red-figure cup by Douris, from Tarquinia.
c. 480 B.C.
Boston : Museum of Fine Arts (95.31). Diam. 0.21 m







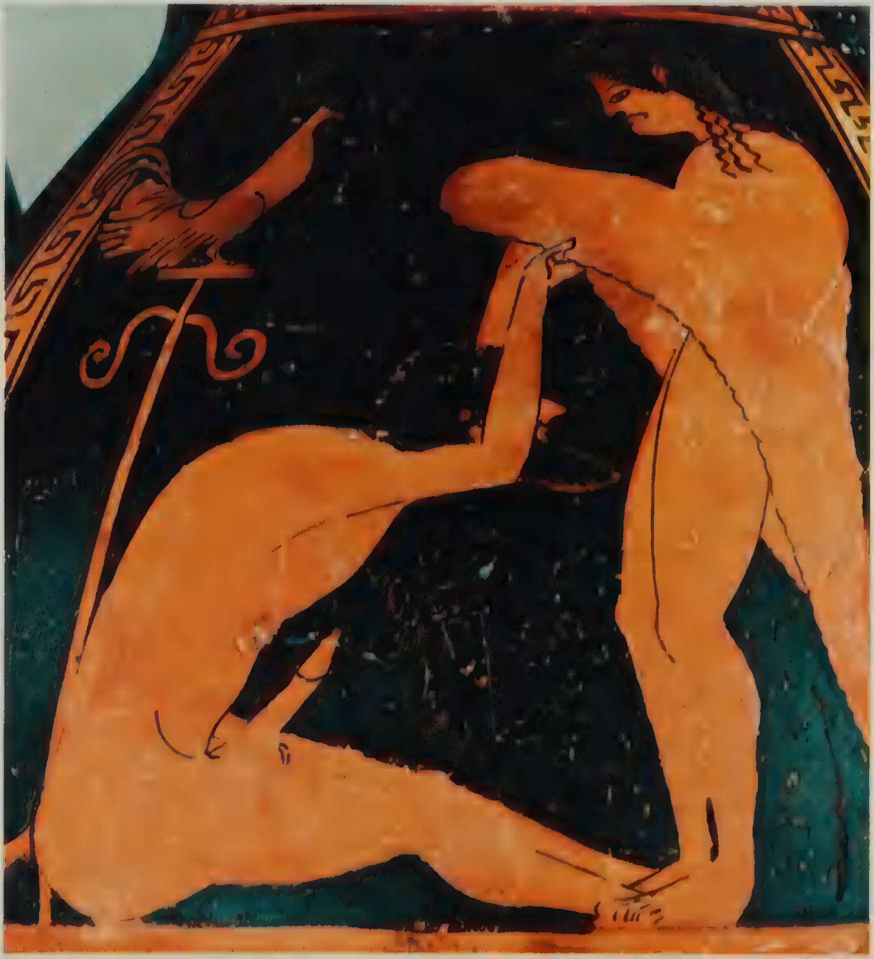


▪ VASE WITH EROTIC SCENES

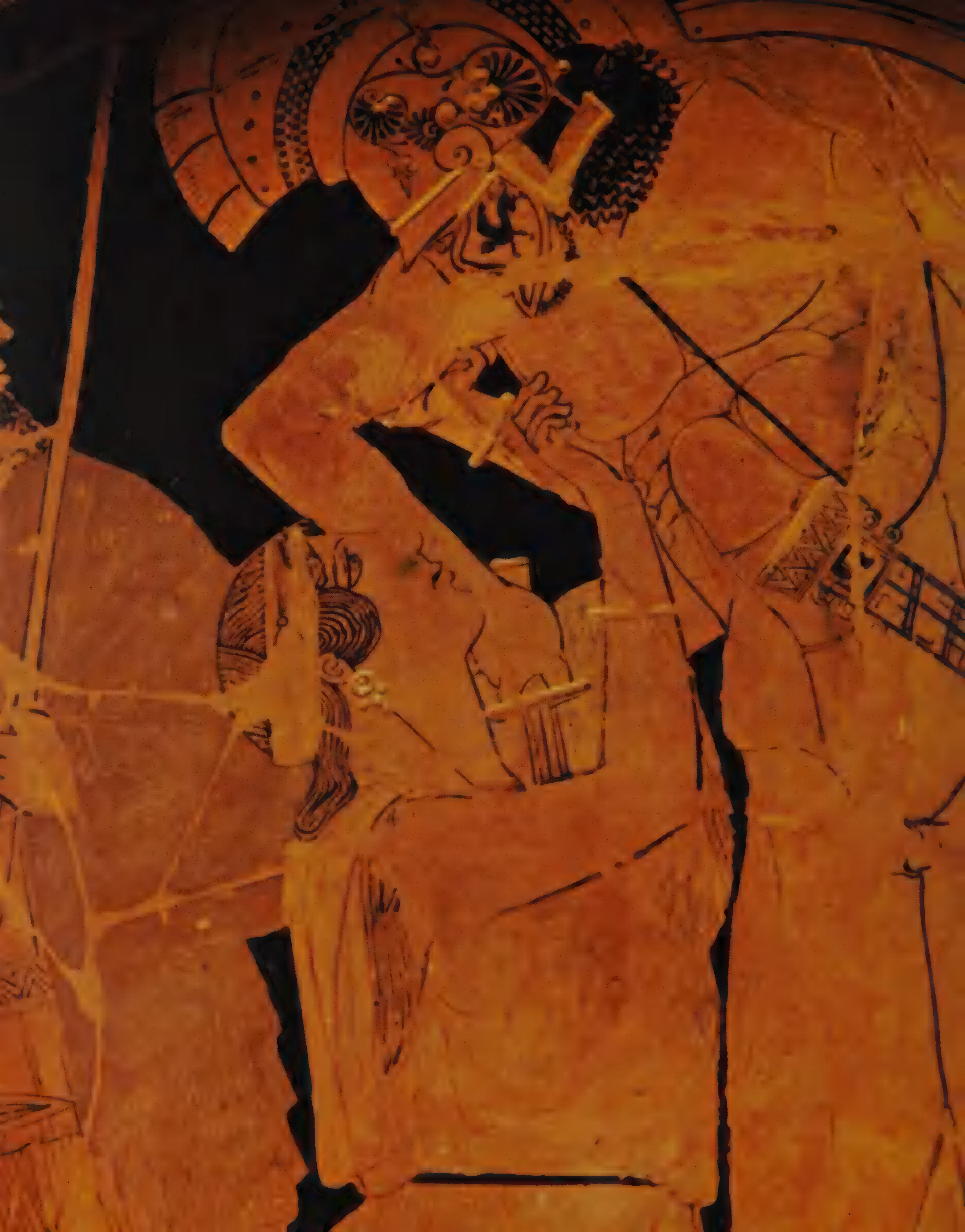
By comparison with the Tarquinian cups, this *pelike* is not of very high quality. It is interesting nevertheless for the inspection scene on side B which is out of the ordinary and has no counterpart in Attic vase painting. This *pelike* is the work of a craftsman closely dependent on the Nikoxenos Painter, a mediocre artist who never approached the quality of his contemporaries, like Euphronios and Euthymides. He painted large vases of presumptuous complexity, generally lacking in much artistic value.

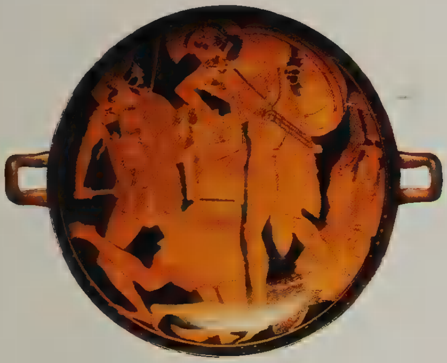
▪ ACHILLES AND PENTHESILEA

Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, has fallen at the feet of Achilles who is plunging his sword into her bosom. The focal-point of the scene is their apparent interchange of glances, and the genius of this invention makes of this cup one of the great masterpieces of ancient art. According to the legend Achilles fell in love with Penthesilea at the very moment that he killed her. The artist has intended to depict that very moment, the culmination of a drama, and has rendered it with a grandeur of conception and a burden of intensity such that the cup seems hardly able to contain such violent pathos. Yet the composition is extremely careful, particularly in the relationship between the two figures. A



VASE WITH EROTIC SCENES
Attic red-figure *pelike* akin to the
Nikoxenos Painter, from Tarquinia.
Early fifth century B.C.
Tarquinia: City Museum. H. 0.34 m





ACHILLES AND PENTHESILEA
Attic red-figure cup by the Penthesilea Painter, from Vulci. *c.* 460 B.C.
Munich: Antikensammlungen (2688). Diam. 0.43 m

warrior and a fallen Amazon balance with their centrifugal movement the centripetal group of Achilles and Penthesilea; nevertheless, beside the two major figures, they appear superfluous.

The painter, named after this work, was more careful in the all-round composition of other scenes but never attained similarly expressive results. There are many things to notice on this cup: for example, the beautiful right hand of Penthesilea resting on Achilles' chest, and the wise eyes with their clear irises. The use of diluted colour contributes to create an effect of polychromy. This motif of meeting glances is found on other works by the Penthesilea Painter but never with such dramatic intensity.

It has been imagined that the painter drew his inspiration from a composition of major wall painting. Unfortunately this cannot be proved though we know that one of the greatest painters of the Greek world, Polygnotos of Thasos, was active in the second quarter of the fifth century. To him were attributed pictures in which the drama of the subject is expressed by a generally static composition, in which the pathos was evidently concentrated wholly in the expressions. Even without taking the literary sources too literally we may suppose that Attic red-figure painters drew some of their inspiration from the great artists of the Severe Style. For this reason perhaps, from 475 B.C. onwards, we note on the vases an incipient polychromy and a greater care in the realisation of perspective effects. In the case of the cup with Achilles and Penthesilea it is to such an influence, among other things, that we may owe the rare use of areas of matt colour.

▪ THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS

On one side of this cup is represented the Judgement of Paris, on the other the Rape of Helen. Following the usual ancient convention each figure is characterised by its own special attributes. Paris sometimes has a Phrygian cap, but, in this case, he is a goatherd, playing the lyre; Hermes has winged boots and his characteristic hat, called a *petasos*; Athena wears a helmet and holds a spear; Hera has a staff symbolic of her dignity as the wife of Zeus; and Aphrodite has a dove. The three goddesses also carry flowers. Aphrodite is literally besieged by erotes. In Classical Greek art landscape details are extremely rare, but on this cup the artist has set the scene by drawing a group of goats around the rock on which Paris is sitting, and these give the picture an uncommon note of freshness and originality.

In earlier representations of the Judgement of Paris the approach was quite different. The goddesses were not at first differentiated by attributes on Attic vases and Paris was shown as a bearded man, not a shepherd prince. Moreover, he displayed alarm at the appearance of Hermes and the goddesses and was often shown running from his duties, sometimes even being forcibly restrained by Hermes. The later treatment of the episode is calmer, more rustic.

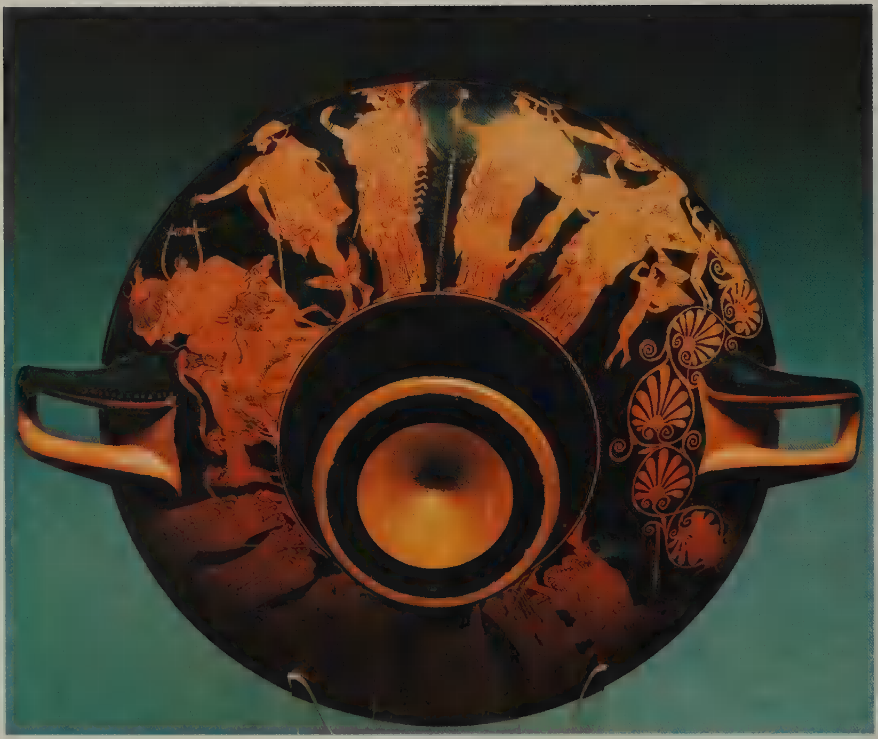
On the other side Paris, two spears in his hand, is leading away the consenting Helen, while a companion of his, perhaps Aeneas, protects his flight by holding back Timandra, one of Helen's sisters, a girl of whom nothing else is known. Another girl, Enopis, is running to call Tyndareus, Helen's father, and the king's brother Icarius.

Makron, who painted this cup signed by the potter Hieron, is known by a signature on a *skyphos* in Boston, but the signature is more often Hieron's, who was the potter most often in collaboration with him. He was active in the first quarter of the fifth century and was obviously influenced by the style of the Brygos Painter, but lacks the latter's extraordinary verve and energy.

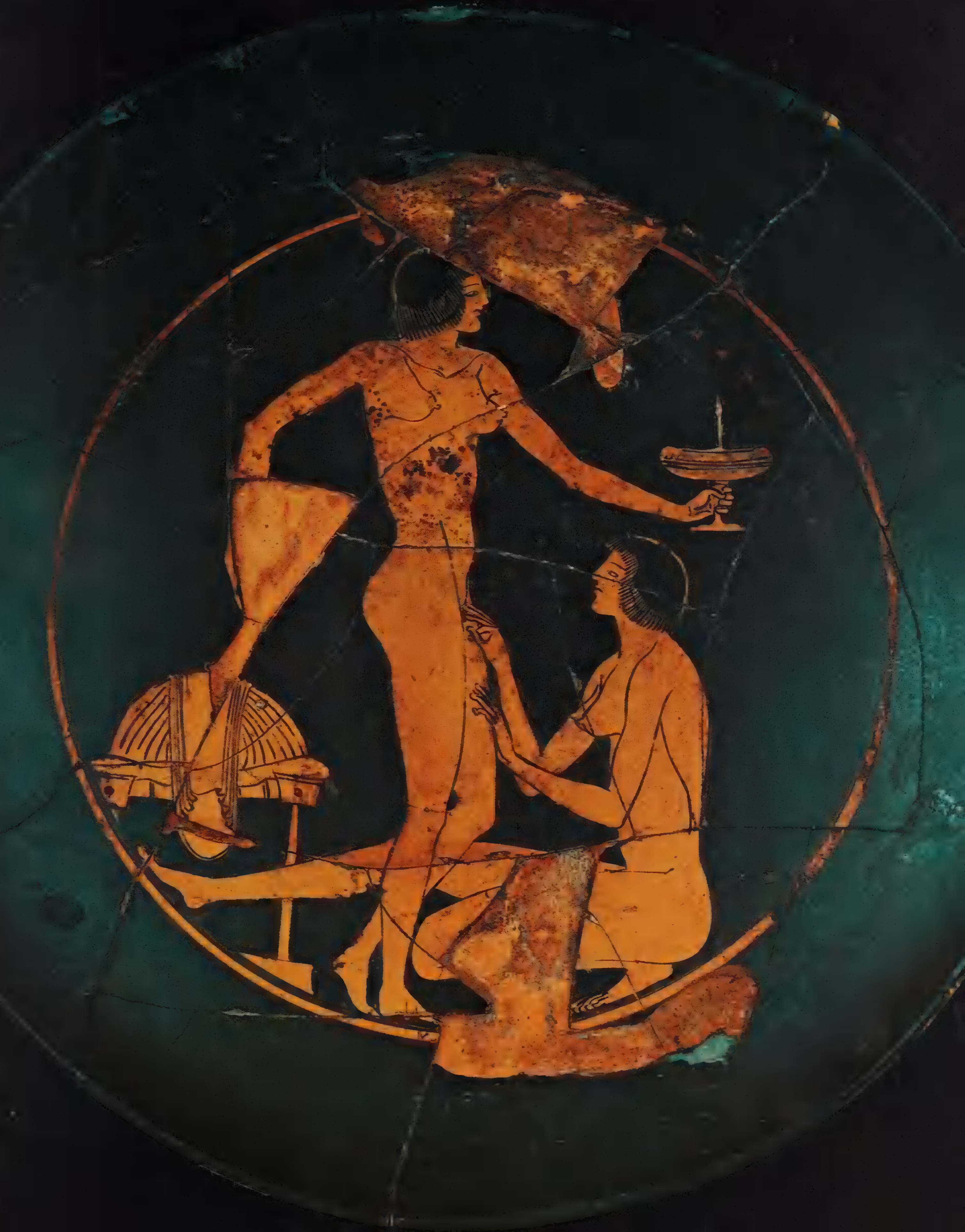
TWO HETAERAE
Attic red-figure cup by
Apollodoros, from Tarquinia.
c. 500 B.C.
Tarquinia: Archaeological Museum.

• TWO HETAERAE

This curious cup treats a thoroughly unusual theme. A naked girl stands holding a bowl which probably contains perfumed water or oil. Another girl, also naked and on her knees, is touching her, probably anointing her with perfume. So this cup is one of those depicting hetaerae preparing for the *komos*, though the chosen theme is unique. In fact, vase painters usually show hetaerae at their bath, or at symposia in the company of men. It is not likely that this scene depicts an erotic relationship between the women, since there are no examples of this in Attic vase painting although such things must have occurred often in a society where the segregation of the sexes was so rigid. This elegant and sophisticated cup is the work of a notable artist of the late sixth century, whose name – Apollodoros – was detected by Paul Hartwig who combined the incomplete inscriptions on two fragments, one at Castle Ashby (Northampton) and the other in the Louvre.



THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS
Attic red-figure cup by Makron,
from Vulci.
490–480 B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (2291).
Diam. 0.33 m



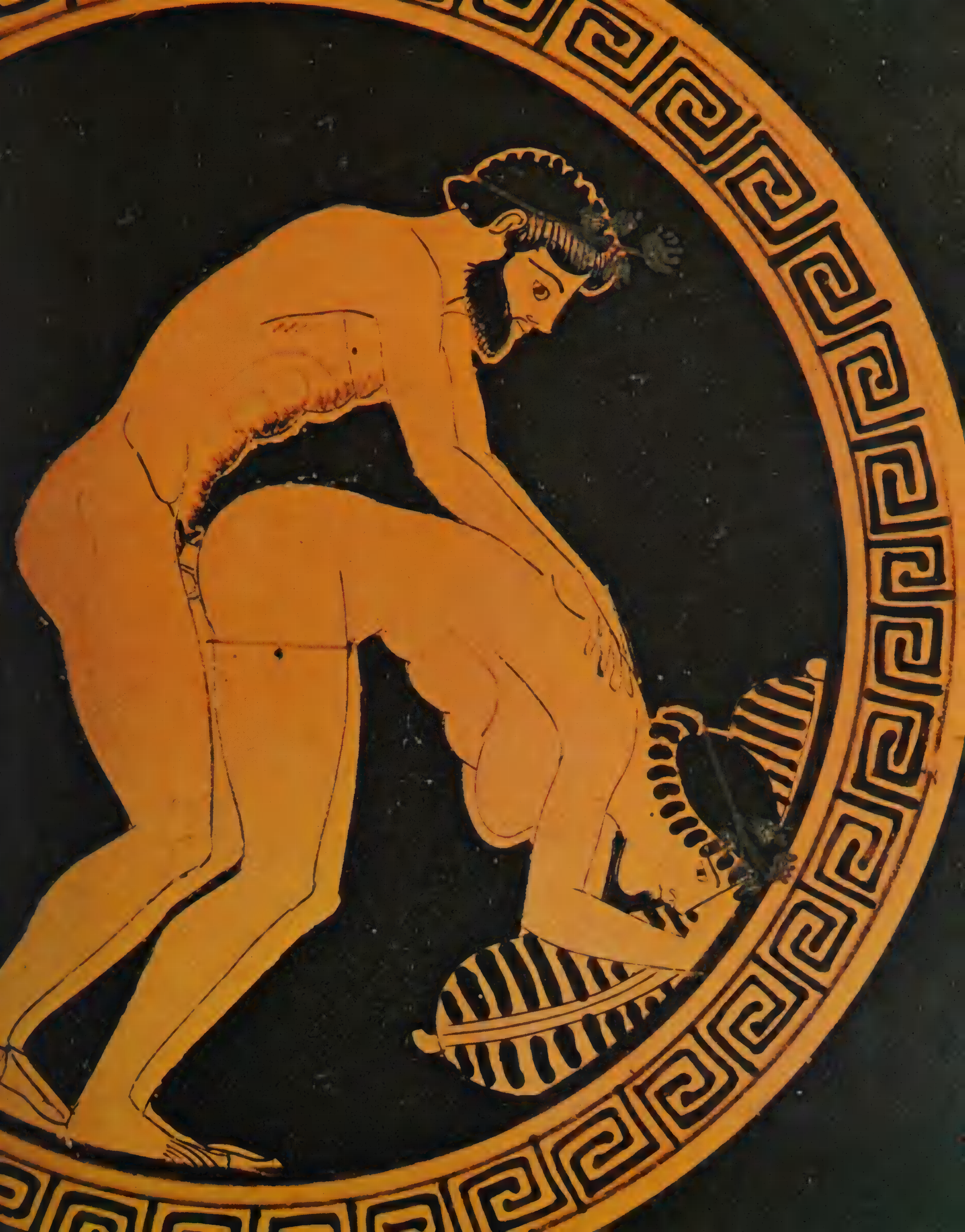
▪ CUP WITH EROTIC SCENE

This cup, which comes from Tarquinia, is one of the works of a pupil of the Brygos Painter, the Briseis Painter, from whose hand we have other erotic compositions not unlike this. Its subject is again the licentious world of the *komos*. In a passage of the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes various erotic positions are alluded to ironically, and amongst others are the ones represented on the Tarquinian cups. Lysistrata is making Kleonike repeat the oath to deny their husbands:

Lysistrata: I shall pass my days in chastity.
Kleonike: I shall pass my days in chastity.
L.: All dressed up in a saffron robe.
K.: All dressed up in a saffron robe.
L.: So that my husband gets the urge.
K.: So that my husband gets the urge.
L.: But he won't get anything if I can help it.
K.: But he won't get anything if I can help it.
L.: And if he takes me against my will.
K.: And if he takes me against my will.
L.: I'll lie awkwardly and not move.
K.: I'll lie awkwardly and not move.
L.: I won't raise up my Persian slippers towards the ceiling.
K.: I won't raise up my Persian slippers towards the ceiling.
L.: Nor stand like a lioness on a grater.
K.: Nor stand like a lioness on a grater. (vv. 218–32).

Verse 230 obviously refers to the poses on the cups of the Triptolemos Painter; verse 232 to the pose on this cup with the amusing and rather obscure comparison to the figure of a lioness, bottom in air, serving as the handle of a cheese grater.

CUP WITH EROTIC SCENE
Attic red-figure cup by the Briseis Painter, from Tarquinia.
c. 470 B.C.
Tarquinia: City Museum. H. 0.095 m; Diam. 0.23 m



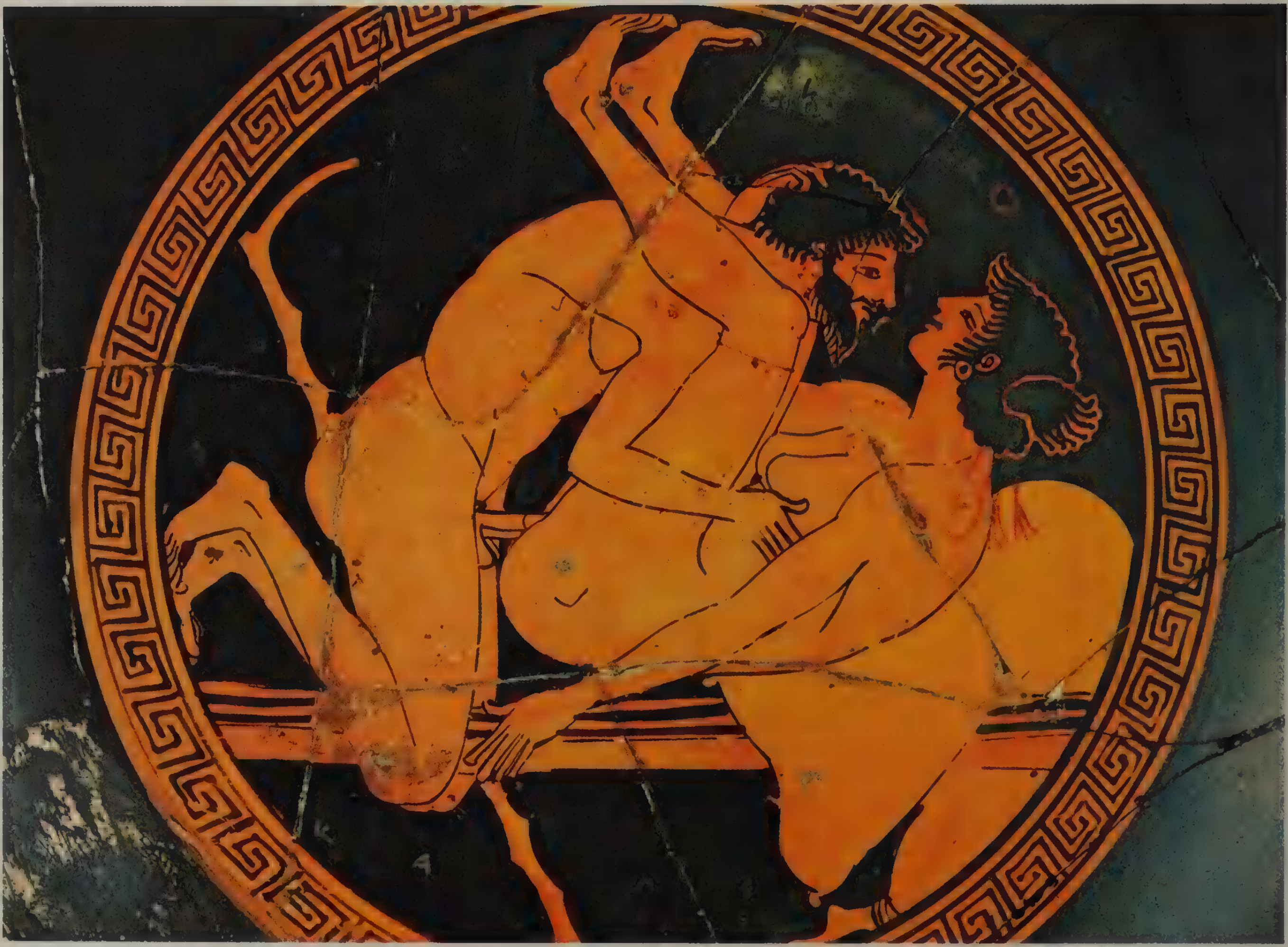
▪ CUPS WITH EROTIC SCENES

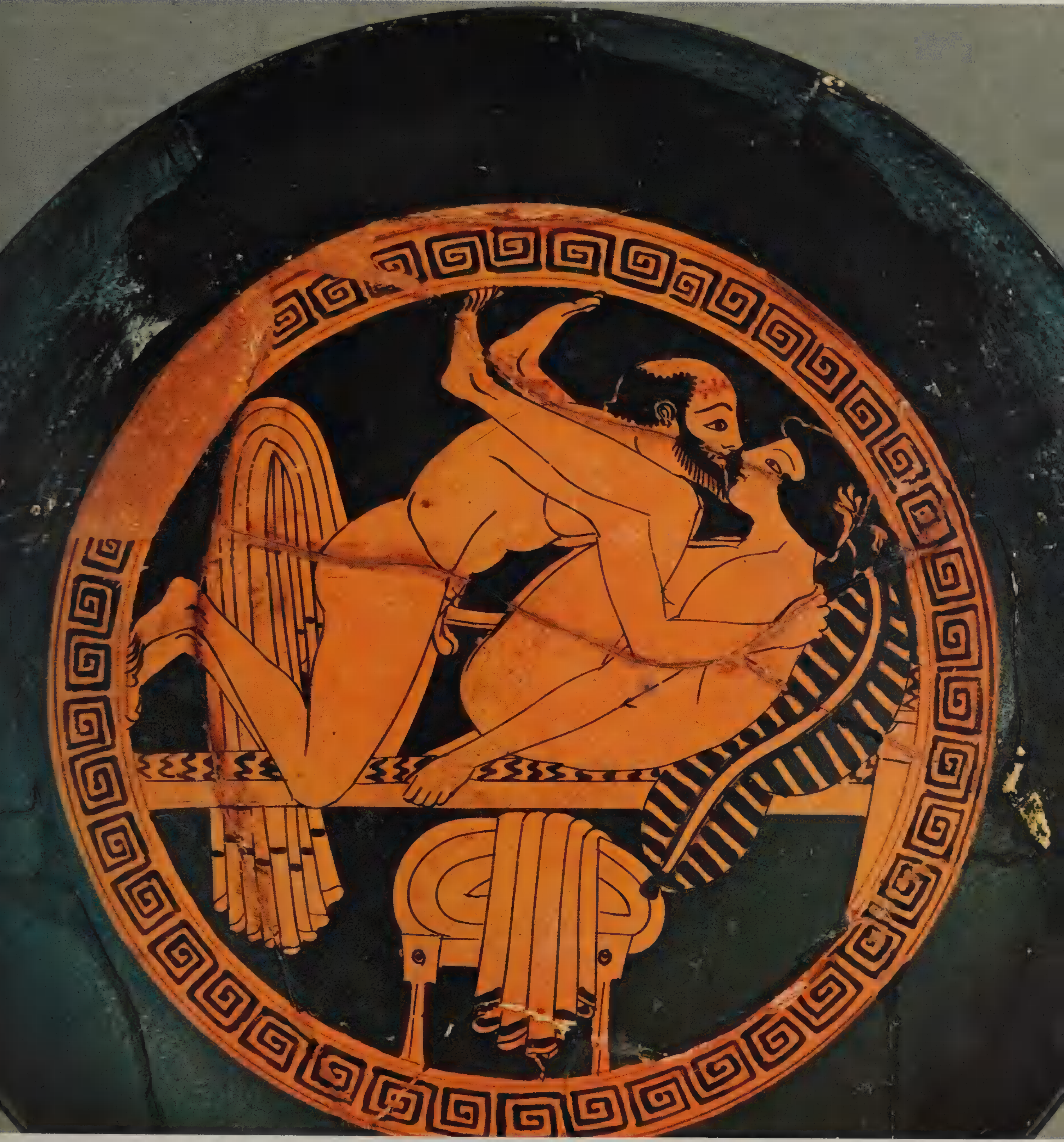
These two cups differ from each other in only a few details. They are the work of the Triptolemos Painter, whose style derives from that of the Brygos Painter. If these are the two cups referred to in the account of an excavation at Tarquinia in 1876 – 'There are also two cups, one rather fragmentary: in the centre is an erotic *symplegma*, a bearded and paunchy Satyr with an entirely naked girl before him' (*Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*, 1876, p. 20) – then it is reasonable to suppose that they come from the same tomb in the area of Monterozzi, and that they were acquired as a pair by an ancient 'amateur' of erotic objects. Note, however, that the bearded figures are not satyrs but mortal komasts, that is, lively participants in the revels.

▪ DANCE WITH PIPES *page 116*

A young man, seated, is playing the pipes. Another young man, standing, leans on a long staff and watches a girl dancing to the rhythm of her clappers (*krotala*). This depicts a *komos*, the frequent subject of Attic vases. The *krotala* are the ancient equivalent of castanets and dancing to their rhythm was a common practice in antiquity, not simply in the world of the symposia.

CUPS WITH EROTIC SCENES
Attic red-figure cups by the Triptolemos Painter, from Tarquinia.
c. 470 B.C.
Tarquinia: City Museum.
Diam. 0.215 m, 0.23 m



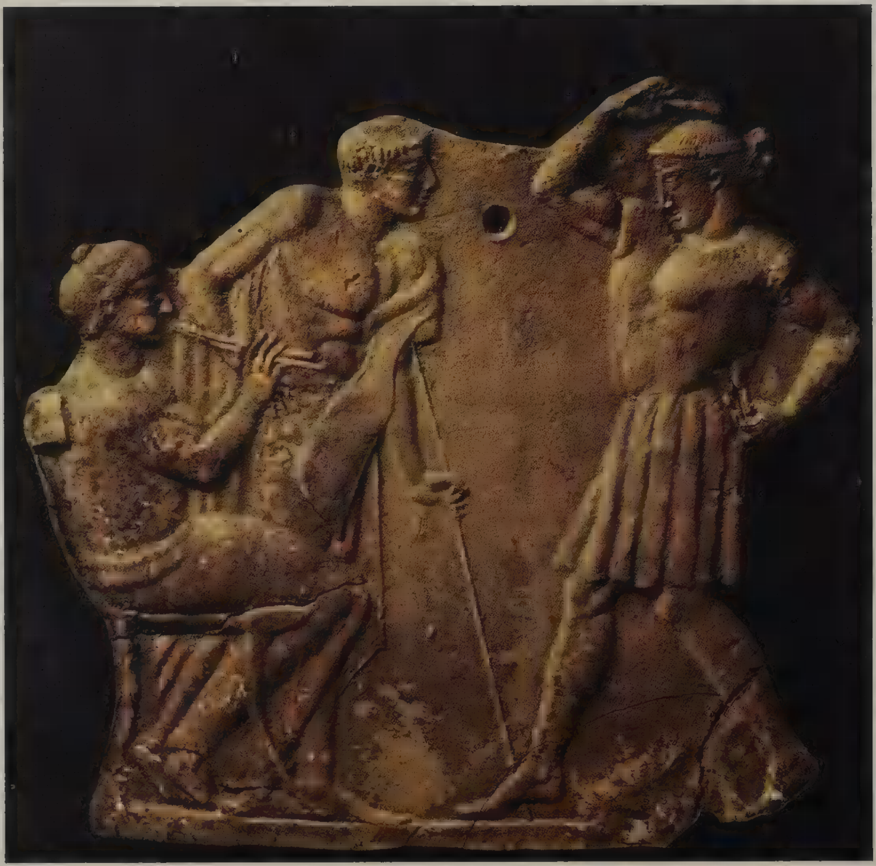


Nevertheless, by that process of generalisation which is still as common in our own day, the word *krotalistria*, one who plays the *krotala*, came to signify a woman of bad reputation, an evident exaggeration given the importance of the dance in the ancient world. *Krotala* and tambourines have, for instance, been found in the tombs of infant girls.

This relief is part of a special group of small terracotta plaques used to decorate wooden boxes; they were produced in the Doric island of Melos between 480 B.C. and about 416 B.C., the date of the cruel annihilation of the population of Melos by Athens at the height of her power. The reliefs reveal strong influences, first Ionic, then Attic. There must have been certain painted additions, since relief plaques of clay were generally covered with a thin coating of white slip and painted over in bright colours.

• EOS AND KEPHALOS

It seems likely that the winged figure represented on this relief is Eos, the Dawn, daughter of Hyperion and Theia. She was the sister of Helios and Selene, the Sun and the Moon. She personified the bright clarity of the morning and for this reason Homer sings of her as rosy-fingered. It seems that she fell in love with Ares, so Aphrodite in jealousy condemned her eternally to love young mortals: Orion, Tithonos, by whom she had Memnon and Emathion, and Kephalos, whom she kidnapped and by whom she conceived the unlucky Phaethon. The rape of Kephalos figures on many monuments of ancient art,



DANCE WITH PIPES
Terracotta relief.
Second quarter of fifth century B.C.
Paris: Louvre (MNB 1035).
H. 0.20 m

especially on terracotta reliefs and Attic vases. There may also have been representations of the rape in acroteria, marble or terracotta sculptures which decorated the tops and corners of temple pediments. Certainly the effect of an image of Dawn, her robes swelling out with the wind which sped her flight, Kephalos in her arms, would have been most striking.

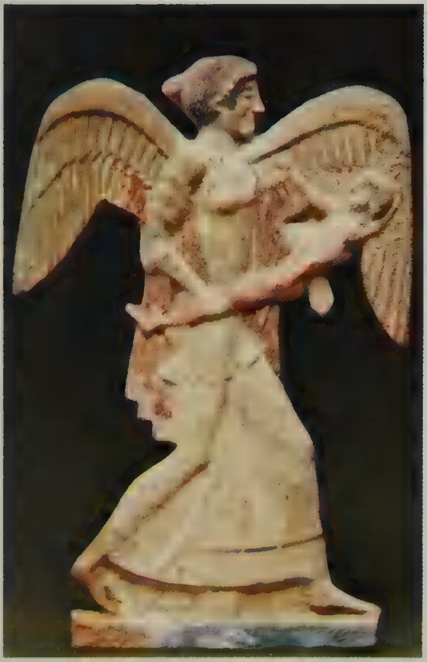
The little clay relief shown here gives an example of such an image. It was repeated with few iconographic variations until at least the middle of the fifth century, that is, before the revolution brought about in Greek art by the work of Phidias.

▪ APHRODITE SEATED *page 118*

Polychrome cups with a white background are fairly rare. They are known from more or less the same period as the white ground *lekythoi* but they present a greater variety of subjects. The greatest painter of white ground cups was the Pistoxenos Painter, an artist stylistically so close to the Penthesilea Painter as to create some problems. We must remember that the names of the vase painters are most of them merely conventional: it is thus possible that two 'artists' who are distinct in style may in fact be the same man at different periods of his career. In the case of the Pistoxenos Painter, despite his undeniable similarity to the Penthesilea Painter, we prefer to keep his works distinct from those attributed to his colleague.

One of his pupils may have been the Lyandros Painter who produced only a few surviving works, amongst which is this cup depicting Aphrodite seated on a throne, looking at a diadem which she holds between her hands. Two erotes are flying towards her to fasten ribbons around her head; in front of the goddess is an incense-burner on a wooden platform. The quality of the picture lies in the sober and discreet polychromy which, combined with a certain monumentality in the figure of Aphrodite, gives tone to a composition which is otherwise not very lively and which lacks that linear dynamism which is the main appeal of the greatest Attic vase painters.

EOS AND KEPHALOS
Terracotta relief, from Melos.
Second quarter of fifth century B.C.
London: British Museum (B 362).
H. 0.155 m



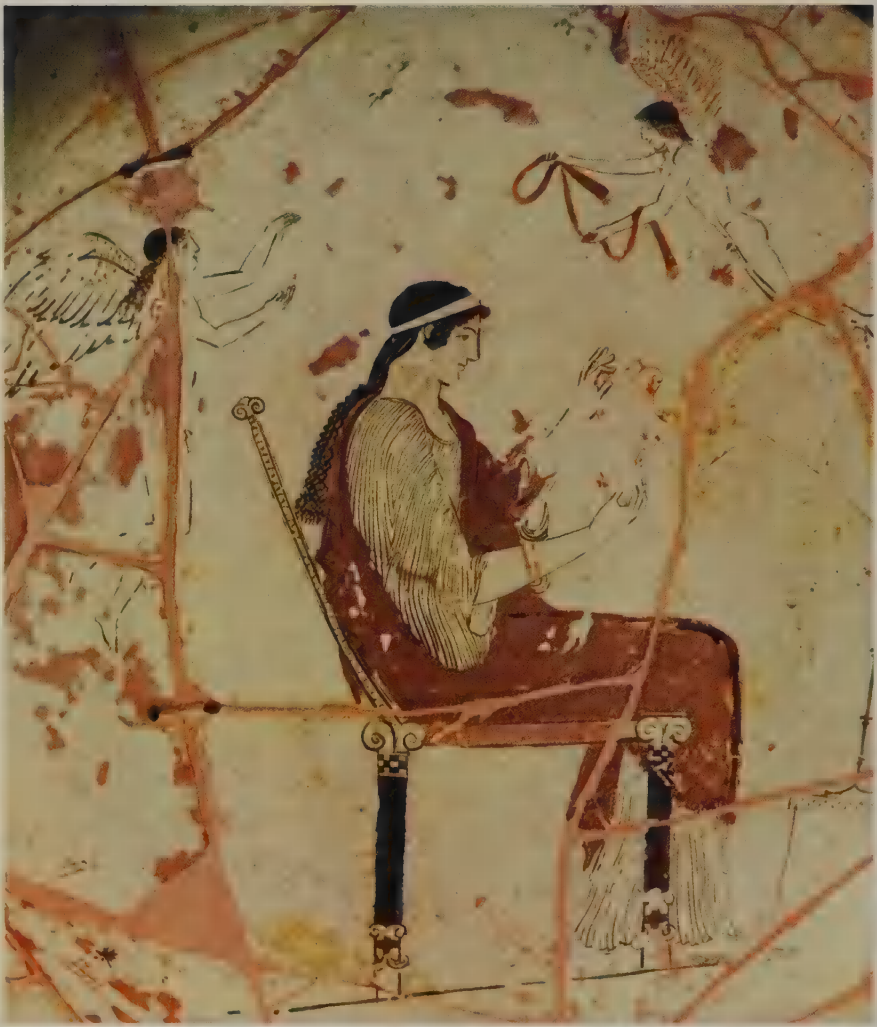
▪ THE RAPE OF PERSEPHONE *pages 119 and 120 left*

At Locri there was an important sanctuary of Persephone, one of the most famous in the Greek world. This chthonic divinity, Queen of the Underworld and bride of Hades, received as votive offerings plaques of terracotta showing various features of her cult. As well as scenes of sacrifice and offerings to the divinity, one series of plaques depicts her being carried off. There are various treatments of the same subject, and we can count at least ten quite different scenes of the rape. Sometimes Hades is old and bearded, at other times young; on some plaques Persephone is fighting against her fate, trying to free herself from the god's hold, on others she is almost his accomplice. Though they were produced for a purely local market the finely worked Locrian clay plaques sometimes passed over the straits and reached Sicily where examples have been found. Their style is Ionic, similar to the reliefs from Melos which were produced for a quite different and not particularly religious setting. In the Rape of Persephone it is clear that the story contained precise allusions to rites and mysteries concerning the changing seasons and the condition of Man who was promised, if not eternal life (a vague idea which was not particularly common in the Greek concept of the afterlife), at least an awareness of his state and acceptance of it. But it is interesting to note that in the Greek world relations between man and woman are often conceived in terms of violence and rape.

▪ ZEUS AND HERA *page 120*

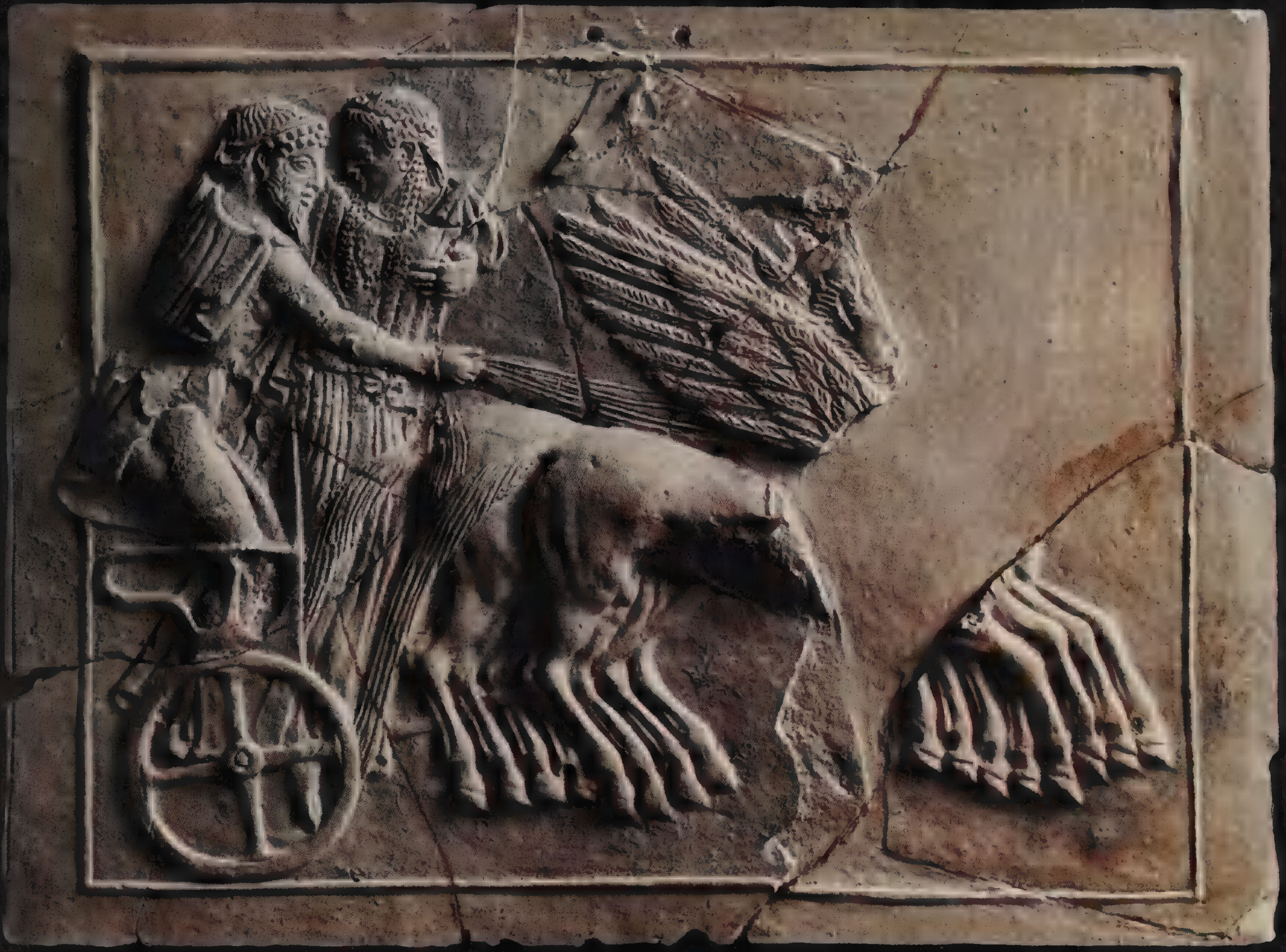
Zeus, seated on a rock, is grasping Hera by one arm and drawing her vigorously towards him. The god's avid desire is expressed in the treatment of the torso with the tension of the muscles, and especially in the face with its taut, half-open lips. The goddess, on the other hand, is steady, composed and detached in her attitude. Her right hand may be making a move to repulse her suitor; her left hand is holding a veil to cover her face, whose grave and sublime expression is in marked contrast to the greater vivacity of the head of Zeus. It seems that the real protagonist of the scene, the focal-point, is Hera, not her spouse.

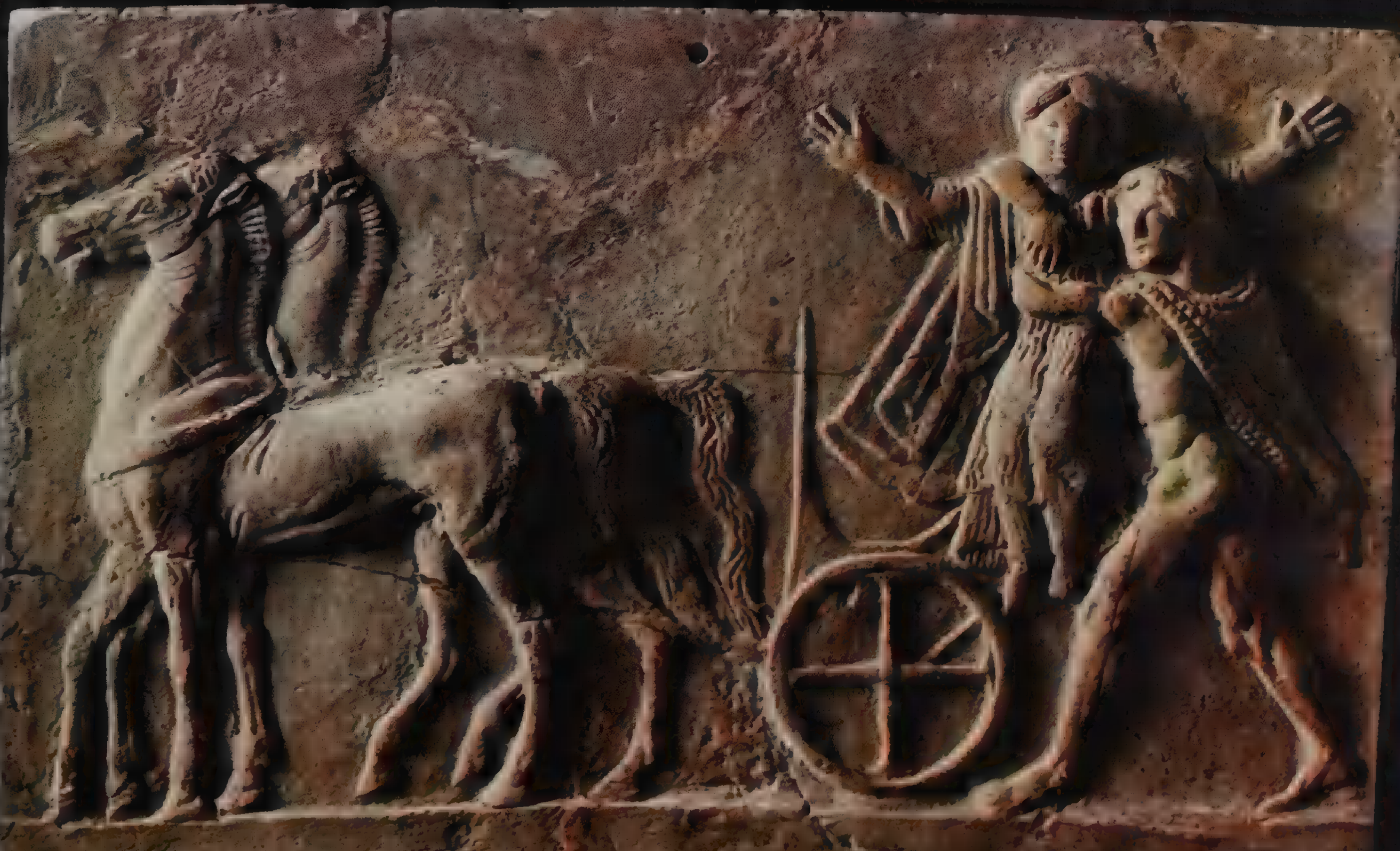
This metope, with eleven others, decorated the two short sides of Temple E at Selinus, which has been recognised to be a *Heraion*, a temple dedicated to Hera. Both the style of the architecture and that of the surviving metopes – five in all, plus some fragments of others – seem to indicate a date in the decade 460–450 B.C., just as the Severe Style was changing to the full Classical. The setting is provincial in comparison with the great artistic centres of Greece proper, for example, Athens, Argos and the Cyclades, and this is probably why there is a

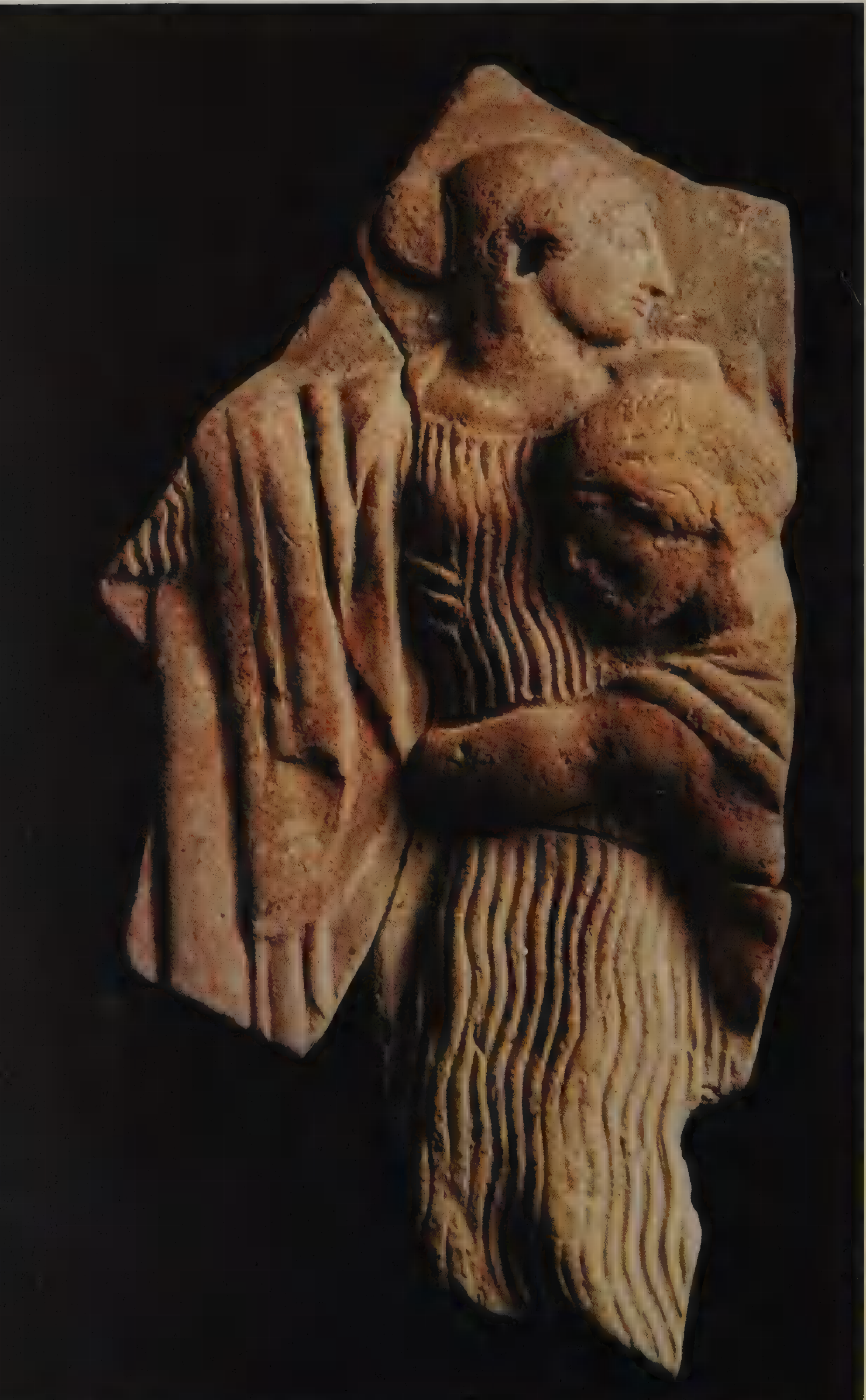


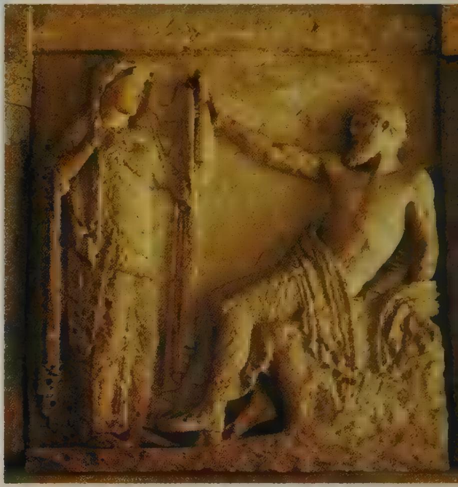
APHRODITE SEATED
Polychrome Attic cup by the Lyandros Painter, from Cesa near Bettolle.
c. 460 B.C.
Florence: Archaeological Museum (7540 S). Diam. 0.285 m

Opposite page
RAPE OF PERSEPHONE
Terracotta reliefs, from Locri.
Mid fifth century B.C.
Reggio di Calabria: Archaeological Museum.









Left
RAPE OF PERSEPHONE
Terracotta relief, from Locri.
Mid fifth century B.C.
Reggio di Calabria : Archaeological Museum.

ZEUS AND HERA
Metope from temple E at Selinus.
Limestone and marble.
Mid fifth century B.C.
Palermo: Archaeological Museum.
H. 1.62 m

certain old-fashioned quality in the way the robes are treated and in the composition of some of the metopes, the one with Athena and Enkelados, for example, as well as a certain expressionism which was not at all common in Greek art. In the metope of Herakles fighting an Amazon the hero's foot tramples down the warrior-woman whose mouth is tense and half-open. In the metope of Artemis, with Actaeon torn to pieces by his dogs, the hieratic severity of the goddess contrasts with the fierce and cruel image of the animals sinking their teeth into the youth. Still, we must not forget how little has survived of Greek architectural and temple sculpture, and to what extent our ideas about the development of Greek art are based inevitably on the evolution of Attic art, which is the best known and which, more than any other, shows an undoubted preference for balanced composition and themes rich in calm and composed ethos.

In the case of the metope of Zeus and Hera we can see a possible ideological precedent in the representations of 'sacred marriages' in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., which often contain scenes of a crude realism, incomprehensible unless we bear in mind the religious significance of sexual union between the gods as a symbol of the sacred character of natural events such as birth and conception.

▪ THE GAME OF *KOTTABOS*

At the centre of the scene on this jug is a stand for the game of *kottabos*. On the right the cup-bearer, naked and with a ladle in his hand, checks that the dish placed on the stand is not losing its balance. On the right a woman, richly dressed in a long robe and cloak, is seated, her right arm resting on the back of her chair. A low stool is beneath her feet. In front of the *kottabos* stand is a crater full of wine.

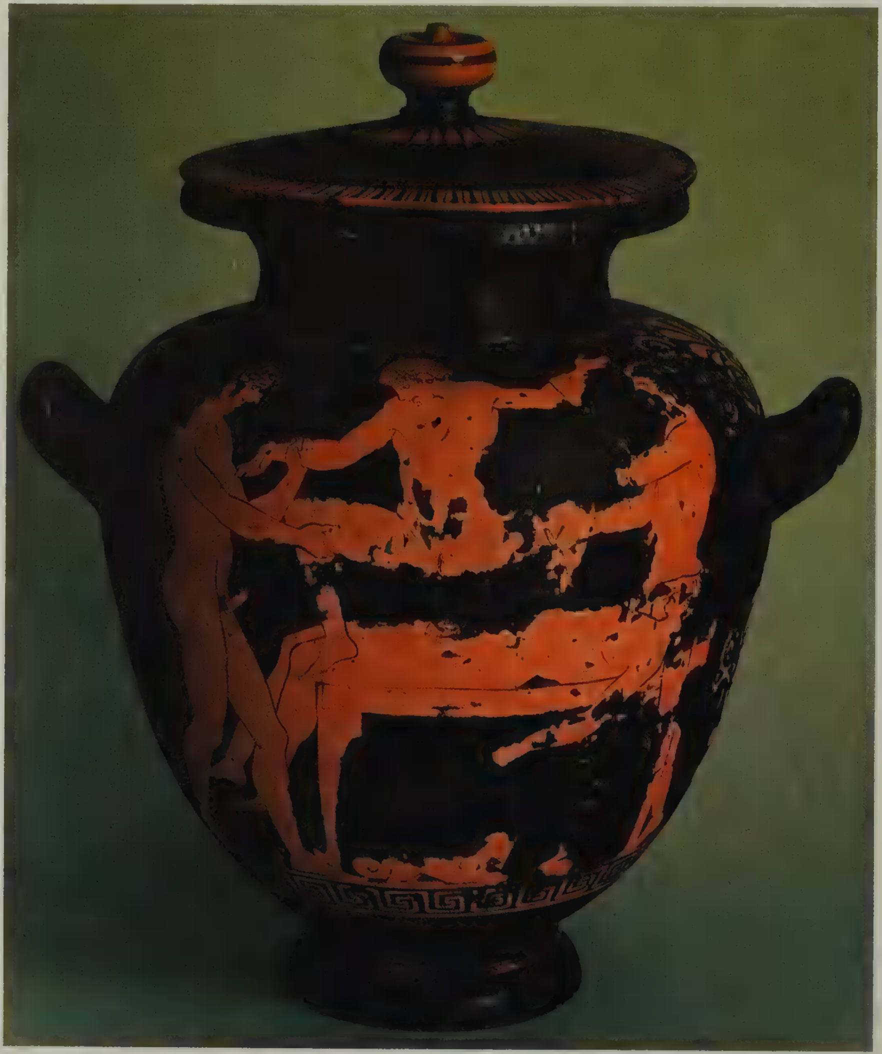
The game of *kottabos* seems to have been Sicilian in origin: it consisted in knocking over a dish, finely balanced on a stand, with a splash of wine thrown from a cup spun on one finger. The game was a great favourite in Classical antiquity, especially when the winner's reward was 'kisses', though it seems likely that in the lively atmosphere of the *komoi* that word had another significance. In fact the winner at the game had the right to first choice among the hetaerae and cinaedi present at the banquet. But when the hetaerae were particularly well known, like the Smikra whom we have already met, they themselves took part in the game and chose their companion for the evening. This custom, which is clearly attested, is one of the few in which a woman had in some sense a choice.

THE GAME OF *KOTTABOS*
Attic red-figure *oinochoe* by the
Phiale Painter, from Tarquinia.
Third quarter of fifth century B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (2416).
H. 0.245 m

This beautiful *oinochoe* is the work of the Phiale Painter, an artist who was active in the third quarter of the fifth century and a pupil of the Achilles Painter; he painted many white ground *lekythoi*. Like many other vase painters of the second half of the century he seems affected by contemporary developments in major painting and especially by the work of Parrhasius who, according to Pliny, attained the greatest perfection in expressing the linear contours of the body. In modern terms we can say that to Parrhasius is due the credit for creating an illusion of plasticity in his bodies by means of the so-called functional line. According to Berenson, who coined the term, this does not just circumscribe a solid object, it suggests its volume. Pollaiuolo was the great Renaissance exponent of this technique.

• EROTIC GROUP

As on the *stamnos* by Polygnotos the erotic game here is carried on without any apparent transport of delight. The scene seems set in a torture-chamber rather than in a banqueting-hall. The woman's lips are contracted in a grimace and the youths' seriousness is almost funereal. The youth lying on the *kline* has one arm motionless and his body lacks tension; and yet the scene is one of the most licentious to be found on Attic vases. This is accentuated by the very lack of vivacity in the drawing, which is not brilliant although correct. This repeats the lesson of other vases of this period. The attempt to repeat formulae which had persisted in vase painting, despite the change in times and mood, shows that the craft was incapable of finding a new direction, and condemned to decline. The technique is the rare one of 'applied red', not true red figure. It should be added that the unique character of the scene has given rise to the suspicion that the painting is false or considerably restored in recent times.



EROTIC GROUP
Attic applied-red *stamnos*.
c. 430 B.C.
Athens: National Museum
(previously in the Dimitriou
Collection).

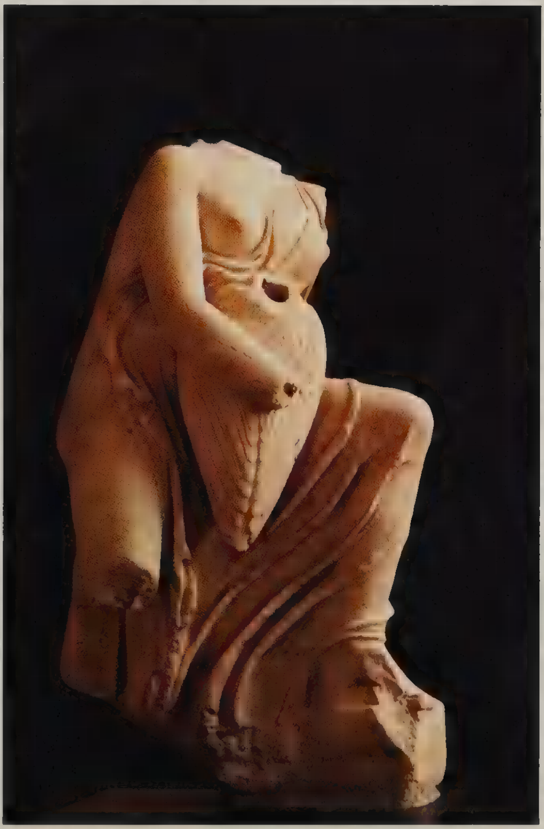
• LEDA AND THE SWAN

Stylistically this group is close to the figures on the Nereid Monument from Xanthos in Asia Minor. The treatment of the dress in particular is similar, with large, swirling windswept folds. The taste for solving the relationship between body and dress by an artful interplay of texture contrasts can be traced to the post-Phidian artistic circle. The particular composition of this group, which is more that of high-relief than of a free-standing work, suggests that it had a decorative function, perhaps as an acroterion over the pediment of a temple.

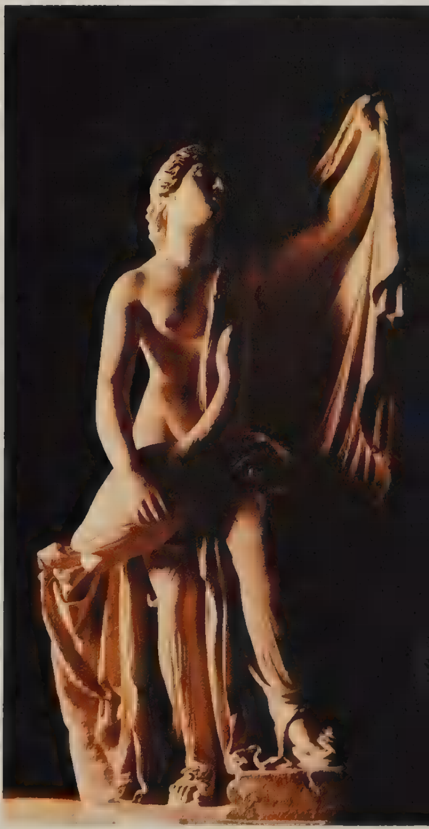
• LEDA AND THE SWAN

According to the well-known myth, Zeus, who had fallen in love with Leda, the wife of Tyndareus, King of Sparta, had recourse to trickery to gain access to her. He changed himself into a swan and, chased by an eagle, took refuge in Leda's lap where she sheltered him with her robe. This group represents Leda, her face looking upwards, holding her mantle high with her left hand to cover the swan resting in her lap. This is the prelude to one of the best-known of Greek love stories, for from the union of Zeus and Leda were born Helen, Clytemnestra and the twin gods Castor and Pollux.

This copy in the Capitoline Museum is the best and most complete of a Greek original of the fourth century B.C. By a fortunate chance, in spite of the fact that Classical authors do not mention this work, we can presume with a considerable degree of certainty that the Leda was the work of Timotheus, a post-Phidian artist perhaps of Ionian antecedents who was active at Epidauros around 370



LEDA AND THE SWAN
Headless statue in marble.
Formerly in the Palazzo Farnese, Caprarola.
End of fifth century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts (04.14). H. 0.885 m



LEDA AND THE SWAN
Marble.
Albani Collection.
After an original of Timotheus.
c. 380–370 B.C.
Rome: Capitoline Museum.
H. 1.32 m

B.C. For the temple of Asklepios there he conceived and in part carved the sculptural decoration on the pediment with an *Ilioupersis* (Sack of Troy) on the east and an Amazonomachy on the west. Many fragments of these sculptures have survived and these give us a fairly clear idea of the style of this artist, a member of the Phidian School which created the decoration of the balustrade of the temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis at Athens, and which liked to bring out the supple fleshiness of naked bodies swathed in soft or transparent robes. This is exactly what happens in the Leda, the magnificent body supply rendered and barely shadowed by the transparent robe. The face, itself, in which are present elements of an accentuated dramatic expression, can be compared with the surviving heads from the pediments at Epidauros. The pathos which we note in the sculpture of Timotheus prefigures the art of Scopas, who may have been a pupil of his and they break completely with the great tradition of fifth-century Greek art.

Pages 126–7
MEN WITH A HETAERA
Attic red-figure *stamnos* by Polygnotos.
c. 430 B.C.
Paris: Louvre (C. 9682).

▪ YOUTH AND GIRL

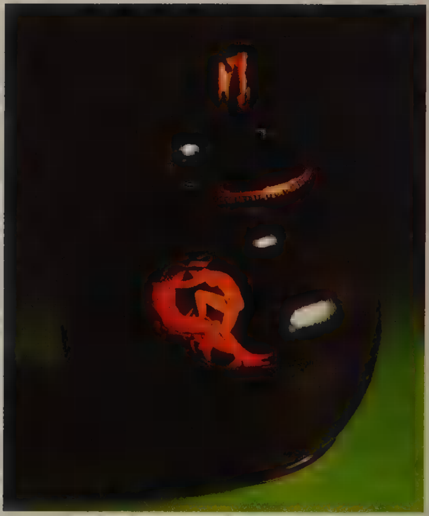
On this *oinochoe*, which is painted completely black apart from the simple, but carefully executed pattern at the lip, there emerge just the two figures of lovers. The quality of this elegant painter who worked in the last quarter of the fifth century is in his compositions, which reveal all their beauty in their careful spatial isolation. It is no accident that some of the best works of the Shuvalov Painter depict scenes of chase in which the energy of the action bursts from the blank background. The way in which the youth is drawn recalls Phidian motifs and as such is found on many Attic funeral reliefs of the late fifth century.

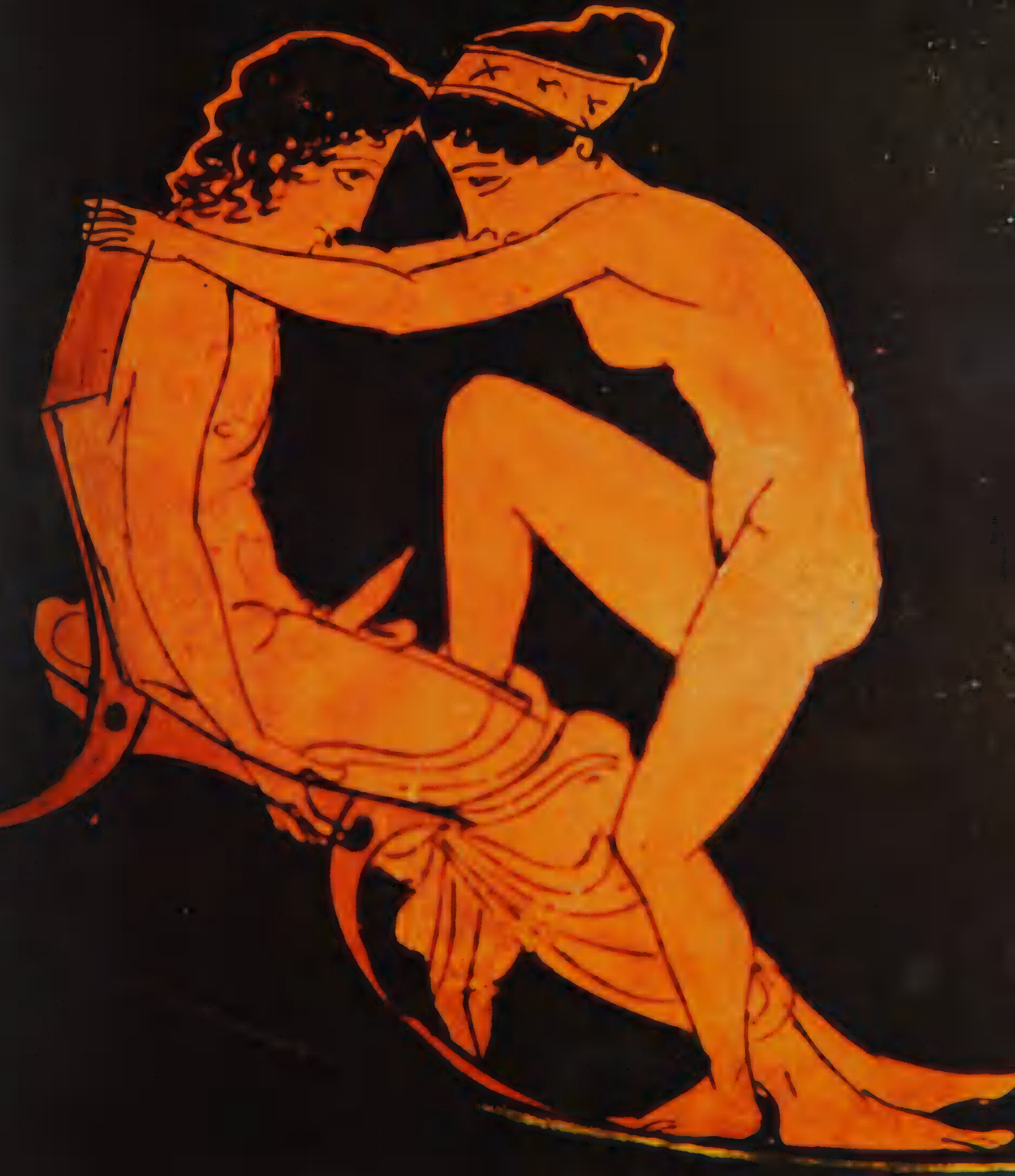
▪ MEN WITH A HETAERA *pages 126–7*

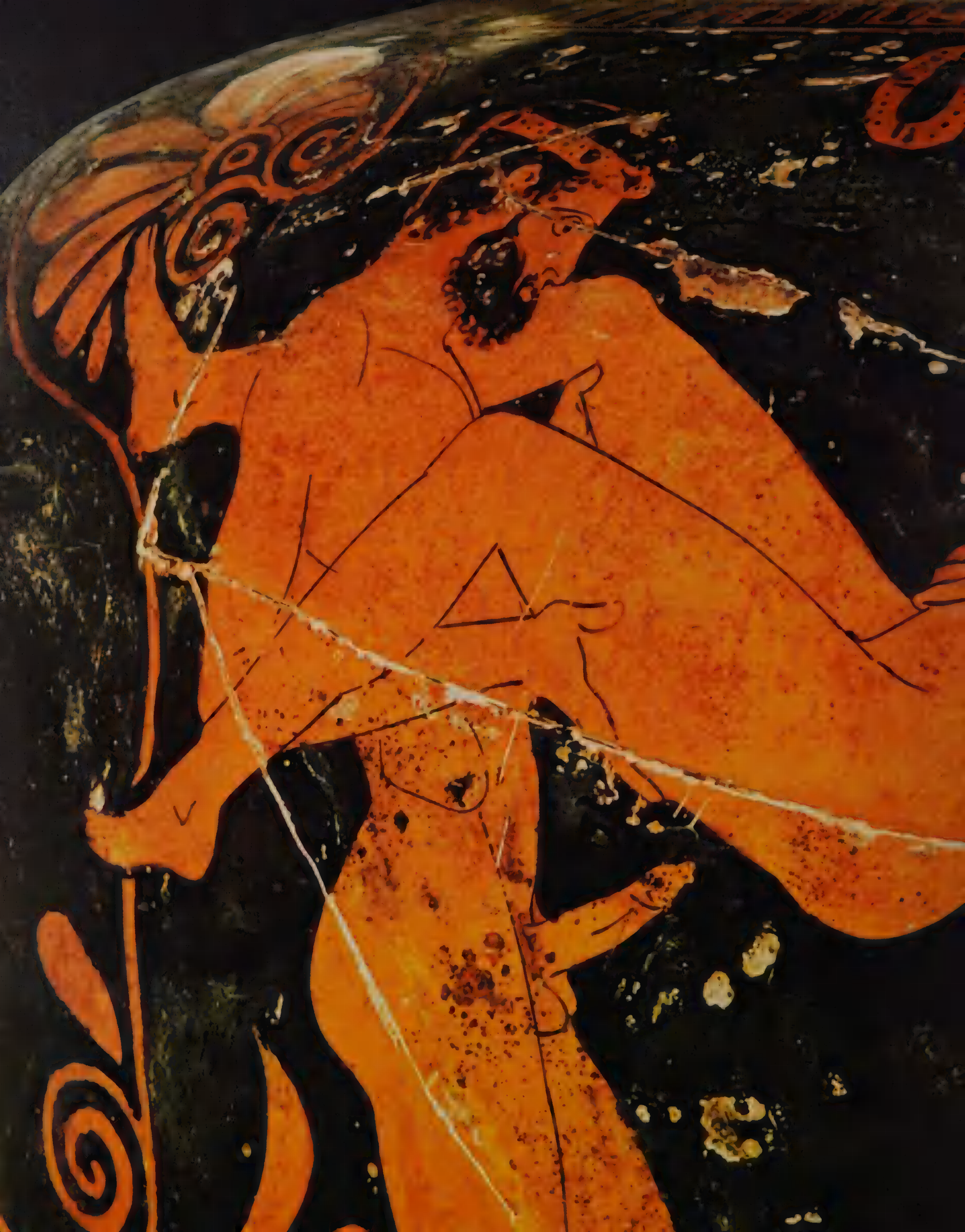
The most peculiar feature of this picture is the seriousness of the characters, which contrasts with the subject of the scene and the activity in which they are engaged. It seems far removed from the cheerful vivacity of older erotic scenes. Here the images are static and silent; they express no emotion but seem pervaded with solemnity as though their action were religious. The effect seems almost Phidian. It is as though, for no particular reason, some of the characters in the procession on the Parthenon frieze had been depicted engaged in less sacred activity but in similar poses and with the same seriousness.

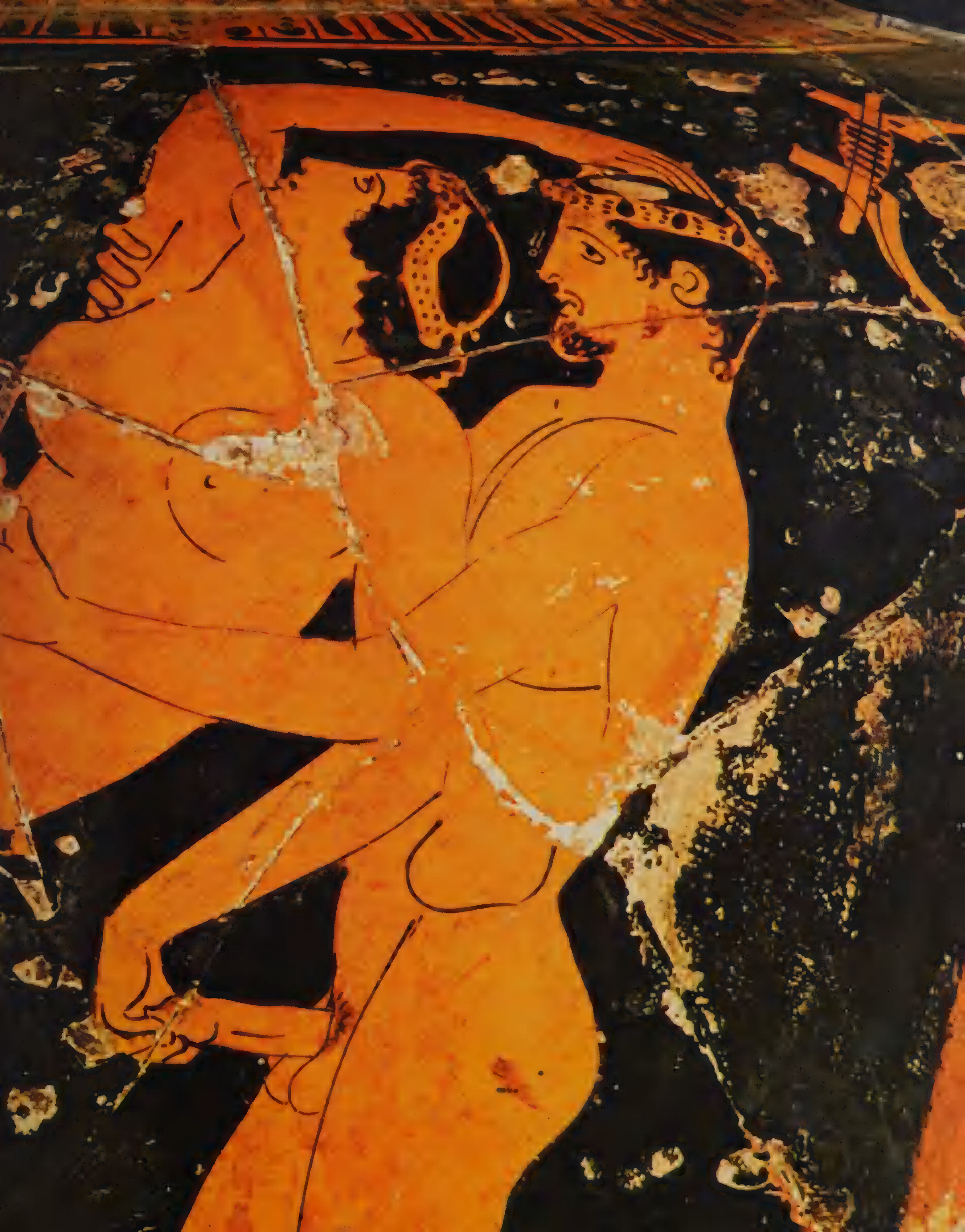
This *stamnos* marks the moment when artistic fashion changed following the activity of Phidias and Polygnotos of Thasos. Though in many cases maintaining their high formal quality – and on this vase the drawing is both elegant and accurate – Attic vase painting has fulfilled its purpose and is no longer capable of summoning any new vitality. The great period of vase painting was the Archaic; with the change in artistic and social conditions in Athenian society in the second quarter of the fifth century it began inexorably to decline.

YOUTH AND GIRL
Attic red-figure *oinochoe* by the Shuvalov Painter, from Locri.
Last quarter of fifth century B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen (2412).
H. 0.19 m









▪ SELENE AND ENDYMION OR APHRODITE AND ADONIS

SELENE AND ENDYMION OR APHRODITE AND ADONIS
Bronze mirror.
Fourth century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by H. L. Mayer (61.1258).
H. 0.19 m

This mirror is not Greek in the true sense of the word. It is of Etruscan make and shape, the latter being of a type unknown in Greek areas. However, the sophisticated drawing and the elegance of the successful composition give weight to the hypothesis that the subject was taken wholesale from a similar Greek composition. A young man wearing a wreath is seated on an acanthus calyx. A female figure – a goddess certainly – dressed in a light robe, is supporting him with her left arm. A broad cloak is stretched out behind the young man, one side held by him and the other by the woman. It is not clear whether the youth is covering or uncovering himself with the mantle of the goddess.

The delicate poetry of the scene seems to refer to the myth of Selene (the Moon Goddess) and Endymion, the handsome young shepherd of Caria. In order to embrace him secretly Selene made him fall into a deep and eternal sleep and placed him at the summit of Mount Latmos in Caria, not far from the city of Heraclea. In the ruins of that city can still be seen the *heroon* of Endymion, built without a roof so that the light of the Moon could bathe the sarcophagus with Endymion's remains. There are a number of variants on this myth, connected, as so often happens in the Greek world, with the rites of death and resurrection. For example, according to another legend Endymion, a guest on Olympus, dared to raise his eyes to Hera and was punished by Zeus who threw him down into Hades. According to a third version Endymion obtained from Zeus the thing he wanted above all else: eternal sleep accompanied by immortality and youth.

Another, not implausible explanation, sees here an episode in the myth of Aphrodite and Adonis (see p. 132). In one version the goddess tries to protect Adonis from the boar by hiding him behind lettuce – a symbolic motif. The Greeks held that lettuce produced impotence and effeminacy. Adonis, dedicated to modish sexual pleasures, was thus unable to face the boar having lost his virility, symbolised by the hunter (compare the tragic fate of Meleager after the Hunt of the Calydonian Boar).

▪ HERMES AND NYMPH *page 130*

Classical Greek mirrors were fitted in round boxes whose lids were finely worked in relief, and the inside of the lid sometimes engraved. It appears that the craft of making bronze mirrors flourished particularly at Corinth, from which town we have numerous examples, but imitations of Corinthian mirrors are not lacking in other areas, Magna Graecia for example.

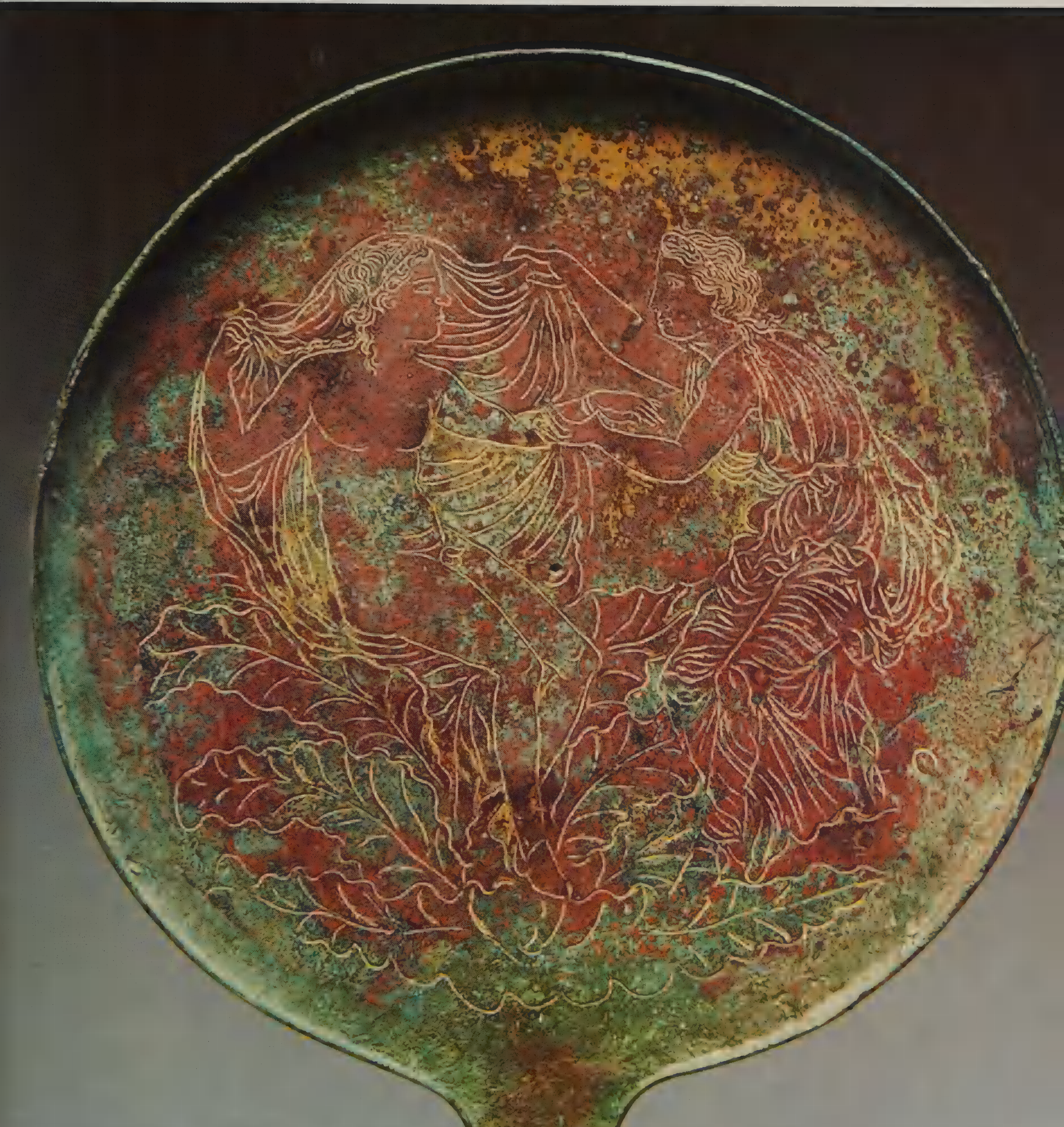
Although it probably comes from Corinth this mirror has more of Magna Graecia in its style. Judging by the headgear of the male figure it must represent Hermes attempting to carry off a nymph. Following a tradition that may go back to the painted tondi of clay cups, the craftsmen who made mirrors preferred two-figure groups which fitted harmoniously into the circular form of the cover. They had a particular liking for rape scenes, where the centrifugal movement and the fluttering of garments gave them scope to achieve remarkable decorative effects.

Page 130
HERMES AND NYMPH
Bronze mirror cover, from Corinth.
Second half of fourth century B.C.
London: British Museum (294).
H. 0.16 m

▪ APHRODITE AND ANCHISES (?) *page 131*

This mirror cover is of very high quality, on a level with the most beautiful repoussé works of the fourth century, of which a crater, recently discovered at Derveni in Macedonia, is an extraordinary example. The greatest difficulty arises in the interpretation of the subject. Even granted that the female figure

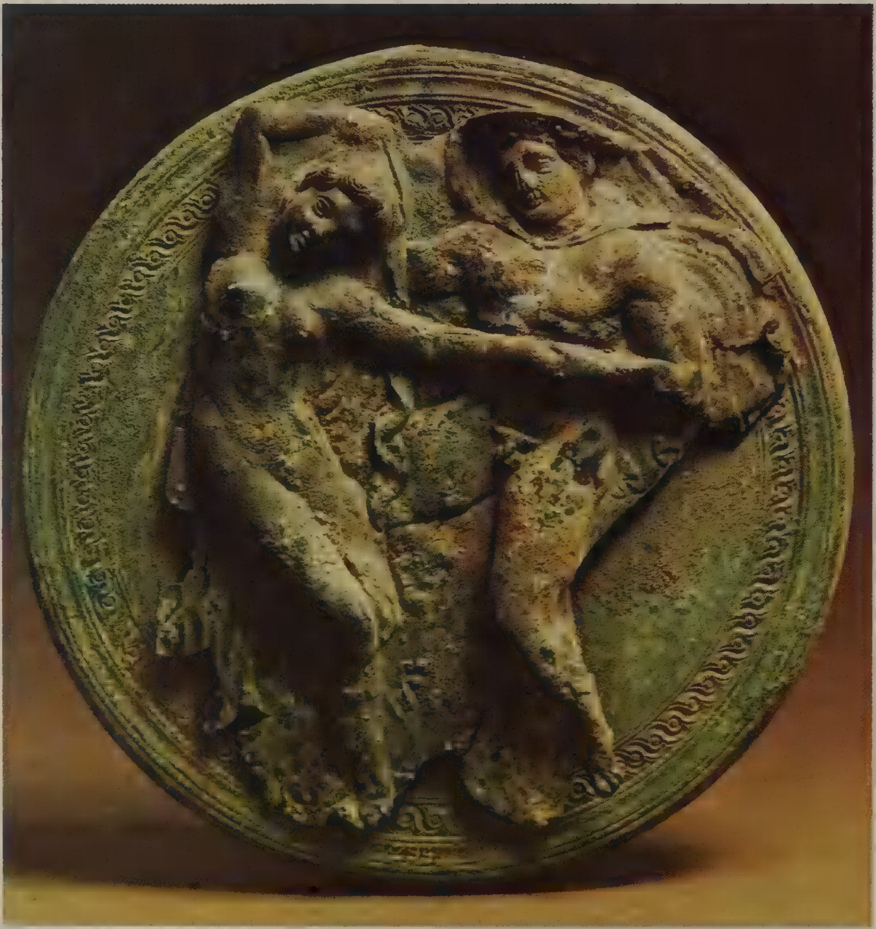
Page 131
APHRODITE AND ANCHISES (?)
Bronze mirror cover, from Paramythia (Epirus).
c. 350 B.C.
London: British Museum (287).

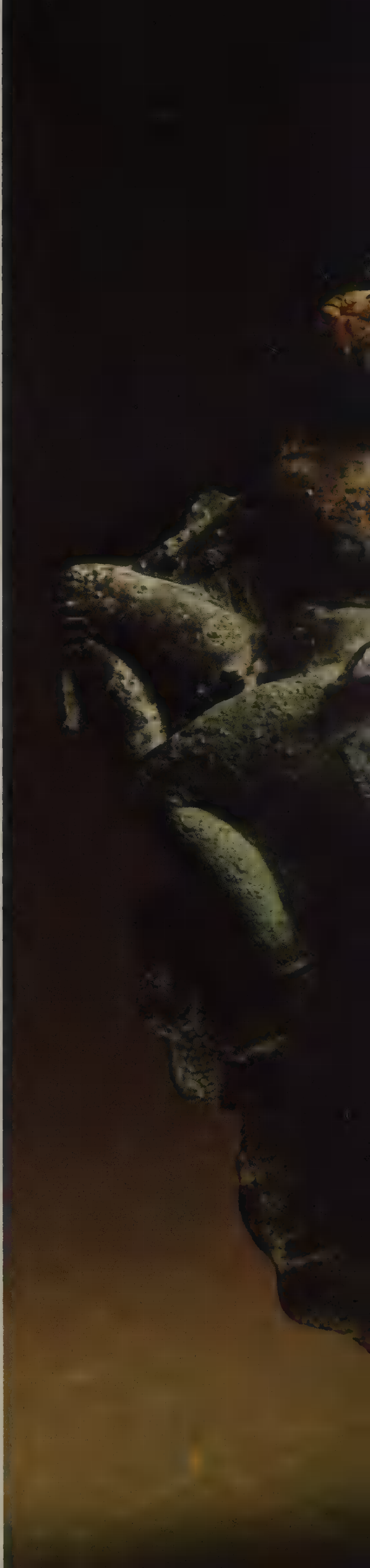


surrounded by erotes is Aphrodite, there remains the question whether the young man in Eastern costume with the Phrygian cap and the long hair falling in curls on to his shoulders is Adonis or Anchises, the father of Aeneas. In favour of the first hypothesis is the fact that Anchises is usually depicted as an old man, even though his love affair with Aphrodite was already known to the author of the *Homeric Hymn* which was dedicated to that goddess. So far as we can judge, it seems that on the fringes of the Greek world there would have been more familiarity with representations of Adonis, whose sad story, with its easily comprehensible symbolic significance, lent itself better to a narrative imagery rich in psychological traits. A Greek of the late fourth century would have had ever present in his mind the tragic fate of Adonis, notwithstanding the serene atmosphere of this particular scene.

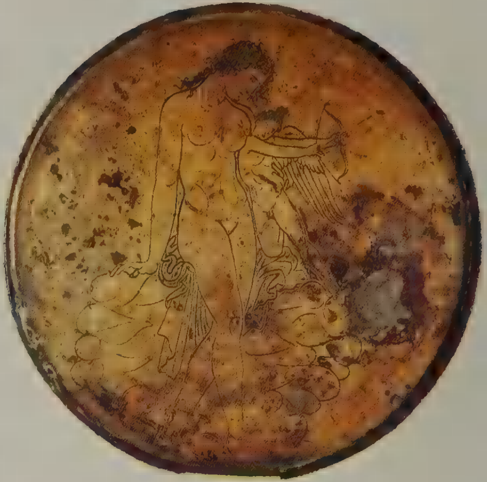
▪ APHRODITE AND EROS

The naked Aphrodite, turned towards the right, leans her right hand on a rocky support. Her hair is in disorder, her head bent. With her left arm she seems to be supporting the winged and naked Eros who, his weight on his right knee, is drawing his bow. His hair is tied up over his forehead. Aphrodite's total nakedness is not common in Greek art before the Hellenistic period and indeed it has been thought that this is the image not of a goddess but of a hetaera. Without presupposing complicated symbolism it is enough to know that a





mirror's purpose is primarily practical and personal, although there certainly were mirrors made for religious or funeral use. But in the setting of a private home there was no reason why the goddess of love should not be represented naked, perhaps even before the *Aphrodite Cnidia* of Praxiteles. In the latter, however, the nakedness takes on a precise ritual significance in the tradition of ancient representations of goddesses who are naked as a symbol of fertility.



APHRODITE AND EROS
Bronze mirror.
c. 350 B.C.
Paris : Louvre (MND 262).
H. 0.19 m

▪ APHRODITE AND ADONIS

Aphrodite, seated on the ground dressed in chiton and himation, takes Eros in her arms. On the left Adonis, naked, his cloak fastened at the neck, observes the scene and points towards Eros with his left hand. A hound is seated at Adonis' side.

Adonis was born under an unlucky star. His mother was Myrrha, the princess of Assyria who, having fallen madly in love with her father Thias, lay with him without his recognising her. When he learned of her crime Myrrha fled and begged the gods to hide her from her father's sight. She was transformed into the tree which bears her name and in the tenth month Adonis was born through a fissure in the trunk. Aphrodite herself brought up the child, who was extraordinarily handsome, but she made the mistake of confiding him temporarily to Persephone. The Queen of the Underworld, enamoured of the boy, refused to give him up and Zeus, who was asked to judge the question, decided that Adonis was to spend four months of the year with Persephone, four with Aphrodite and four where he willed.

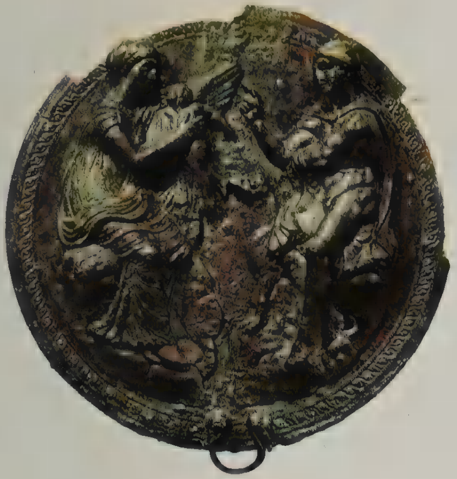
According to a variation on the legend Adonis, already Aphrodite's lover, was killed by a wild boar while hunting. In that variation the dispute arose after his death. The myth, which was Eastern in origin, became in any case widespread in Greece as a symbol of the changing seasons. At Athens in a midsummer festival there was mourning for the dead Adonis and his image in wax and terracotta was exhibited at the entrances and on the terraces of houses. Women wept and danced funeral dances to the shrill music of the pipes. At that time seeds were planted which would sprout quickly – barley, wheat, lettuce – and which then, without firm support, would collapse and wither, a symbol of the youth of Adonis cut short. Amazingly this rite has been partially preserved, particularly in South Italy, in the ceremonies of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

▪ APHRODITE AND ADONIS

The mirror cover, mid fourth century B.C., depicts a common scene : the loves of Adonis and Aphrodite. It is fine work from the studio of renowned Corinthian craftsmen. Similar covers have been found as far afield as Palestrina in Italy and are witness to the wide popularity of these splendid works of art which seem very likely to have been inspired by the subjects of contemporary painting. Adonis, his cheek shadowed by a light down, is seated. Aphrodite at his side is reaching over to kiss him. On the right stands Eros, and on the left, behind the seat, a peacock. Only a little while after this mirror cover was made Theocritus himself was to describe the light down on Adonis' cheeks (*Idyll*, XV, 84–6):

> Adonis the thrice-loved, loved even in Hades, stretches on the silver couch, a glory to see, the first down of manhood springing on his cheeks.

There is a mirror cover similar to this in Copenhagen, bought at Athens, but certainly Corinthian in production (National Museum, 103).

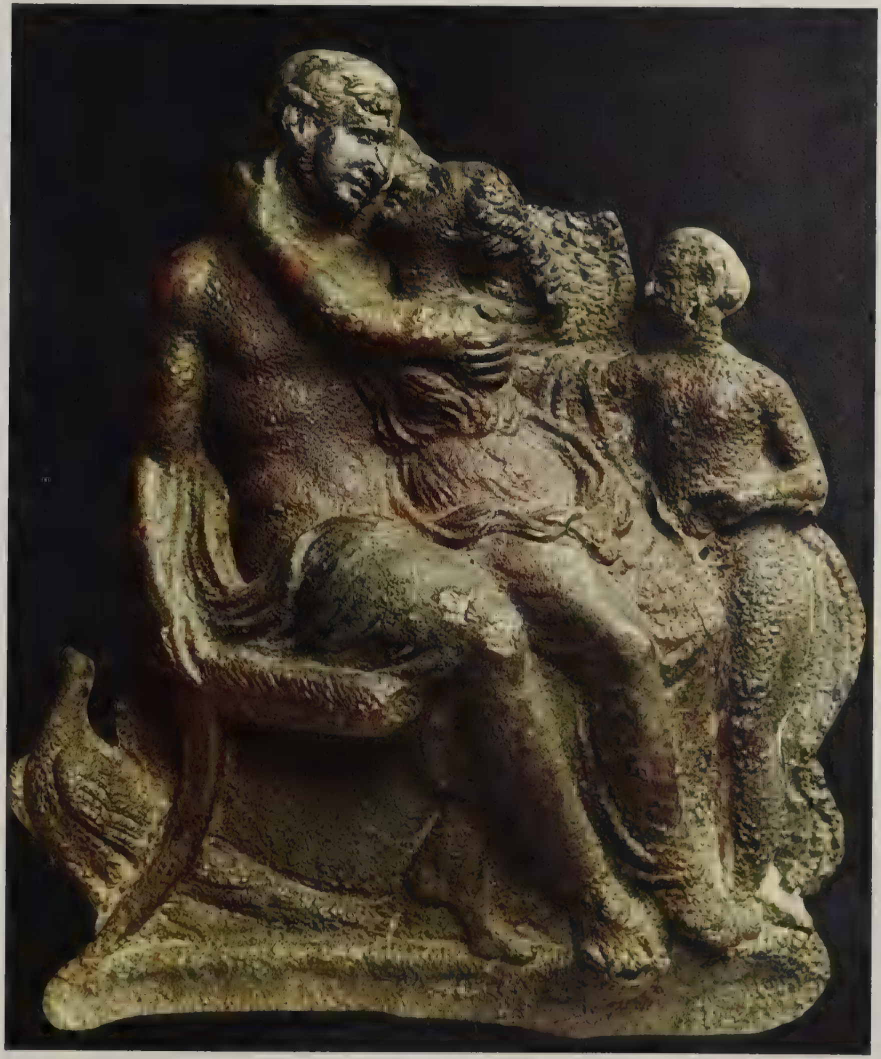


APHRODITE AND ADONIS
Bronze mirror cover, from
Corinth.
Mid fourth century B.C.
Paris: Louvre (MNC 1410). H. 0.18 m

- EROTIC SCENES *pages 134–5*

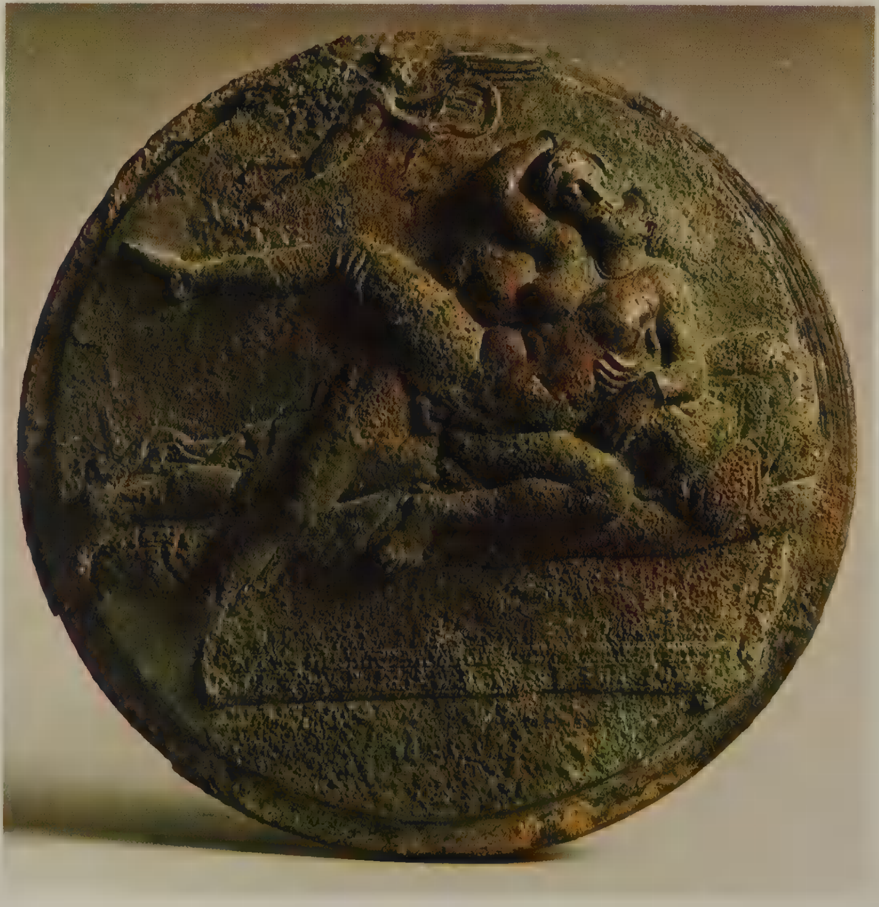
It has been supposed that the Corinthian artists to whom we owe the splendid production of mirrors in the fourth century B.C. drew their inspiration from motifs used by the Sicyonian School. This school of painting was established in the fourth century as a deliberate answer to the contemporary Attic School, which claimed dramatic stylistic innovations, especially in its freer architectonic division of space and in a use of colour which today we would call impressionistic. By contrast the Sicyonian painters drew on the great Classical tradition and remained faithful to the plastic element in design rather than the optical.

The greatest painter of the Sicyonian School was Pausias, who perfected the encaustic technique, and by using it was able to obtain lively and brilliant effects of colour. Given the difficulty of using encaustic (painting with heated wax as a medium) the painter preferred to work in small format. His picture of

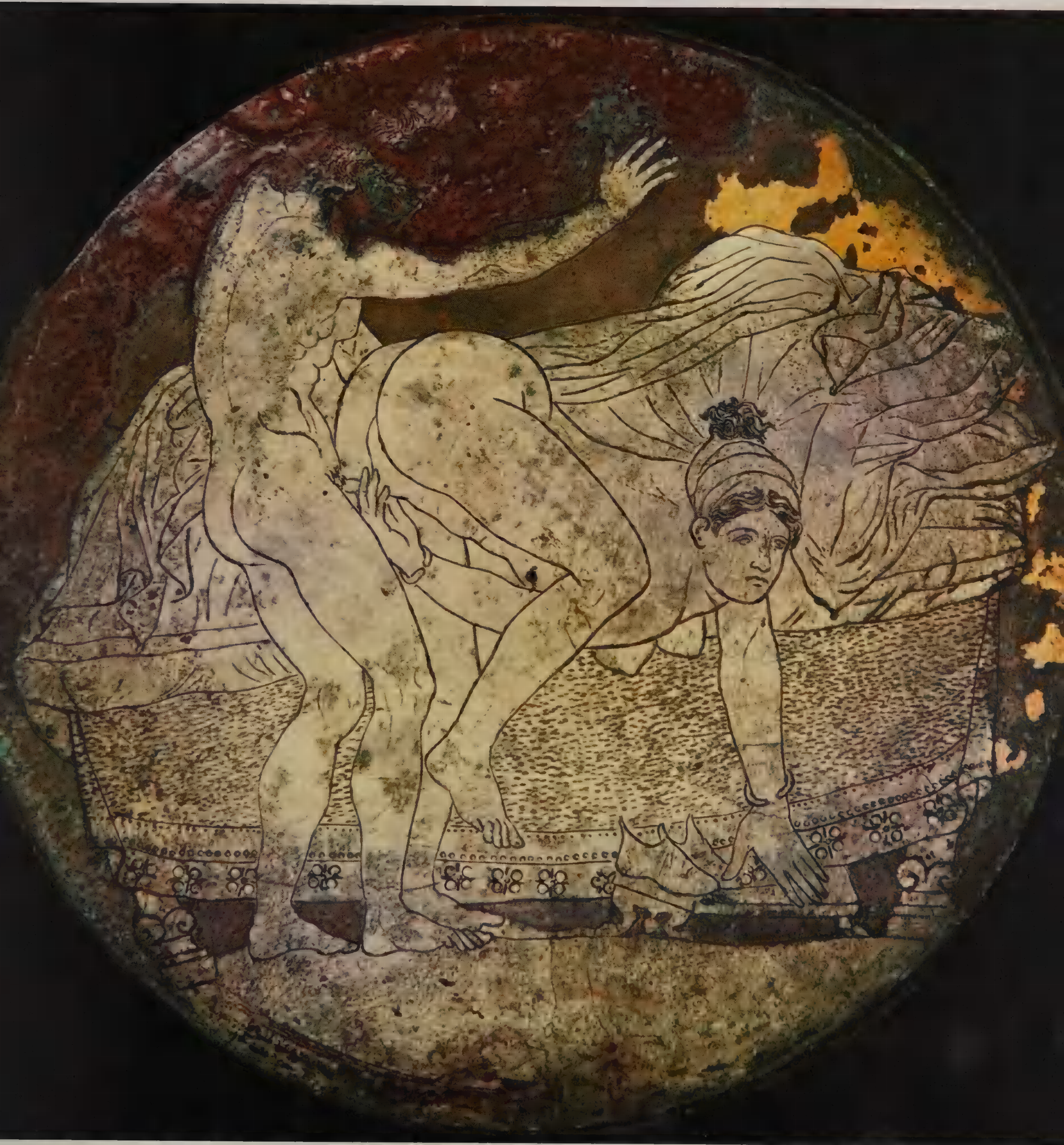


APHRODITE AND ADONIS
Bronze mirror cover, from Corinth.
Third quarter of fourth century B.C.
Paris: Louvre (MNC 623). H. 0.12 m

Methe (Drunkenness) was particularly remarkable and the sophisticated play of light through the glass cup which Methe was lifting to her lips was particularly appreciated. But his obscene pictures were just as famous; they were in a tradition that went back at least to Parrhasius (*c*. 460–380 B.C.). Naturally, in the erotic groups on each side of this mirror cover, critics have tried to find evidence for the erotic painting of Pausias. This is reasonable in view of the fact that Sicyon and Corinth were not far from one another and had deep artistic and cultural links. The modelling of the cover is particularly well done, from the way the bodies are rendered to the softness of the cushions. The engraving on the inside of the mirror lid is less clear; the individual details, especially the body of the youth, are carefully done, but the composition is disharmonious and confused. Note the details, especially the extremely fine rosette border of the blanket. The prototype from which the scene on the cover was taken must have been a general favourite; it is echoed in Hellenistic terracottas and a splendid bronze Roman mirror of the Flavian era.



EROTIC SCENES
Bronze mirror cover, from Corinth.
Mid fourth century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts;
donated by E. P. Warren (Res. 08.32c). Diam. 0.175 m



▪ APHRODITE AND YOUTH – SATYR AND NYMPH

On the cover is a relief representing, on the left, a long-haired youth seated on a rock, his legs crossed, and holding a cockerel in his arms. In front of him is Aphrodite in a chiton and himation, her hair tied in a bun at her neck and holding a bird in her left hand. Behind her is Eros. The interior of the mirror lid, however, is engraved. On the right a young satyr, naked, attempts to tear the mantle from a nymph, who draws away.

Both the cover and lid are of sophisticated workmanship, with elegant engraving in which the fluid lines of the bodies' outlines create surprising decorative effects.

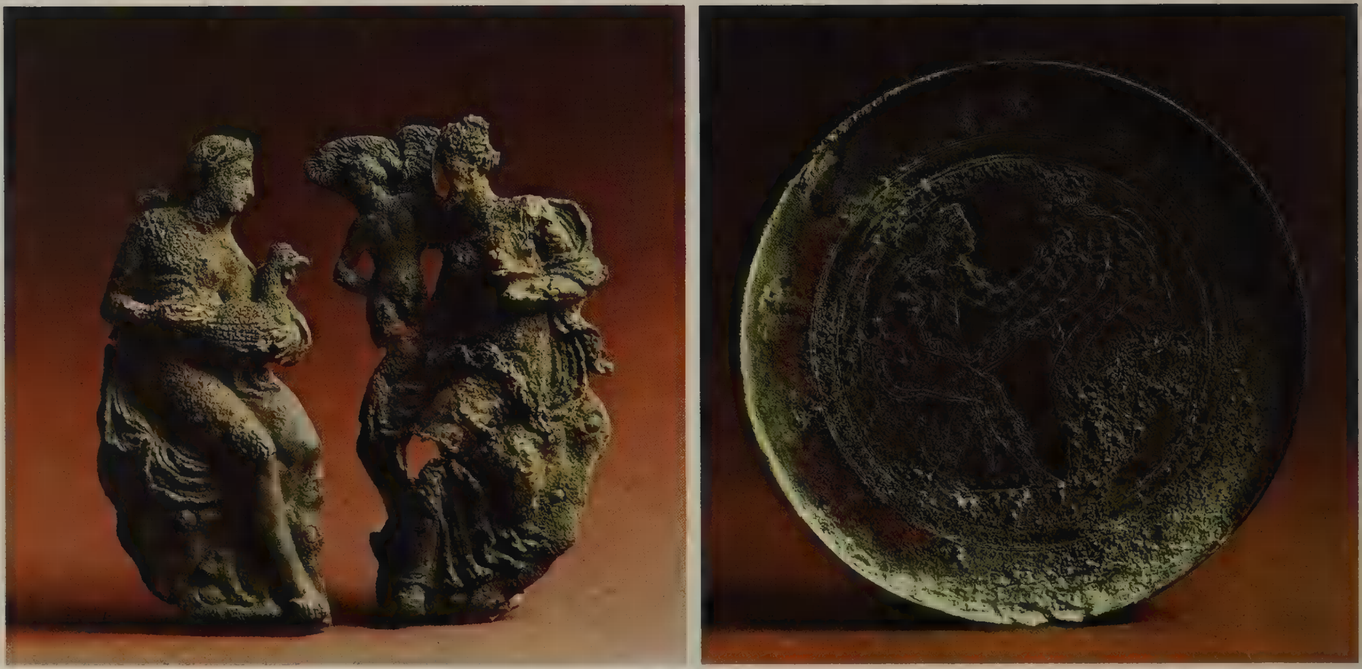
There are various suggestions as to the significance of the scene depicted on the cover. Among others it has been thought that the youth is to be identified with the young hero and Cretan god Velchanos, depicted on coins of Phaistos. From Hesychius we know that Velchanos is a personification of Zeus, but since the mirror is Corinthian any link with a local Cretan cult remains altogether tenuous. The question remains open.

▪ SYMPOSIUM

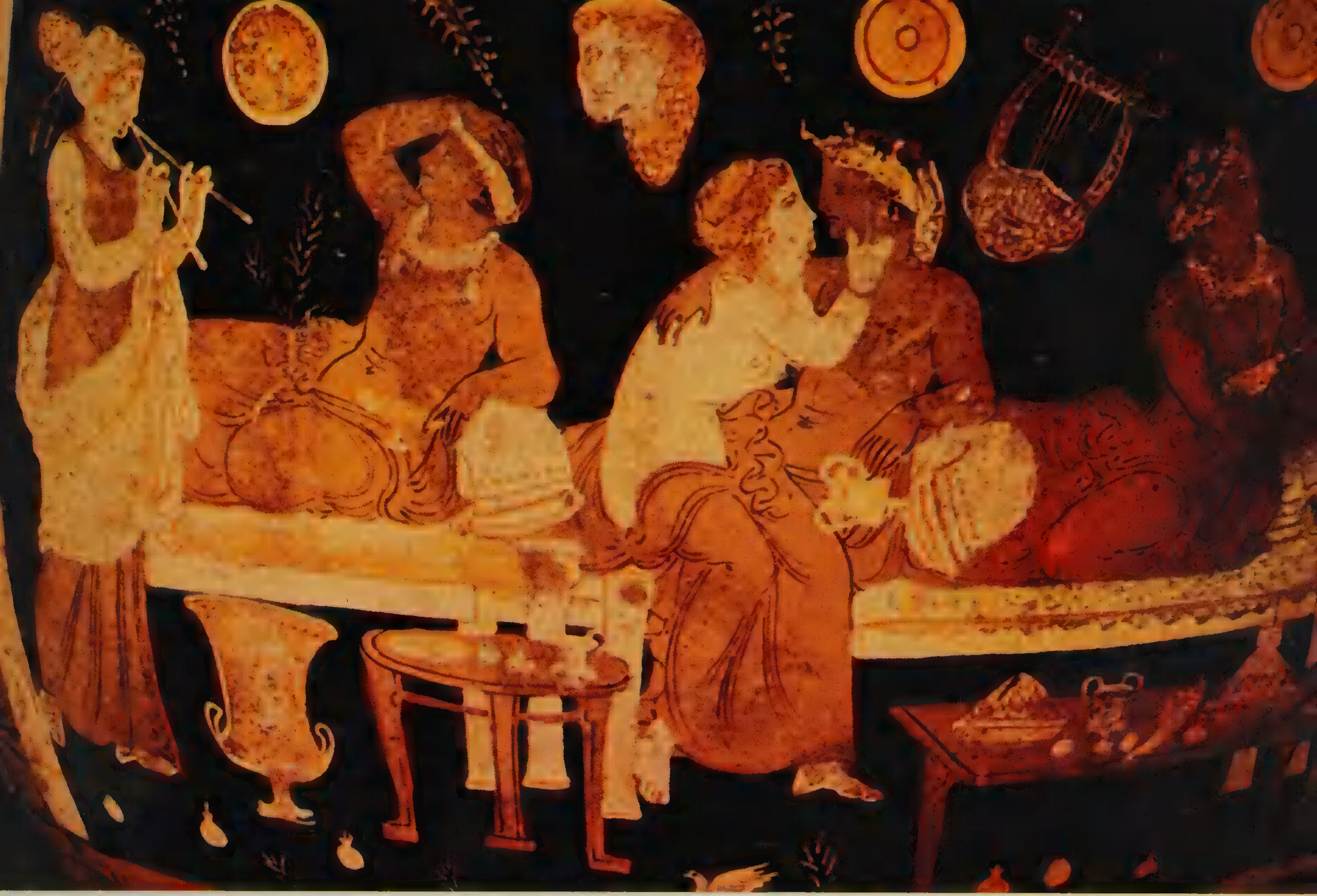
Three guests are lying on the *klinai*; the youth in the centre is embracing a half-naked hetaera. On the left is a pipes-player, on the right (out of sight here) was a very young cup-bearer and the stand for the game of *kottabos*. In composition the vase is not very different from a large number of Attic vases depicting symposia; here the novelty lies in the sober but evident polychromy and in the analytical representation of an interior. Objects hanging on the walls are often found in the pictures decorating the walls of tombs in Italy, for example at Tarquinia and Paestum.

This crater is from the atelier of the CA Painter. He was a Cumaean painter who can have been no stranger to the influence of Athenian vases of the so-

SYMPOSIUM
Campanian red-figure bell crater by the CA Painter.
Second half of fourth century B.C.
Naples: Archaeological Museum (RC 144).



APHRODITE AND YOUTH – SATYR AND NYMPH
Bronze mirror cover.
c. 325 B.C.
London: British Museum (288).
Diam. 0.18 m



called Kerch Style. Active in the second half of the fourth century B.C. in a Greek colonial area which had by that time been permeated by native (Oscan) influence, the CA Painter continued to express himself in a style which can be called Greek. The flesh of the female figures is done in white on which the artist has added anatomical details with yellow lines.

Vase production in Campania was mostly intended for Oscan consumers; it bears witness to the process of Hellenisation of the Apennine peoples who had occupied the fertile Campanian plain towards the end of the fifth century.

▪ GEM WITH EROTIC SCENE

As on the Arretine bowls of the late first century B.C. this gem seems to be dominated by a taste for contrast between the strongly moulded forms of the bodies and the soft texture of the cushions and covers. From the way her hair is arranged we can tell that the girl is Persian; in the East such scenes of love-making, often from behind, seem to have had a religious significance. The particular position of this youth is not normal in Greek pictures, but the raised legs of the woman call to mind the image from the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes, with Lysistrata advising her companions not to 'raise up their Persian slippers towards the ceiling'.

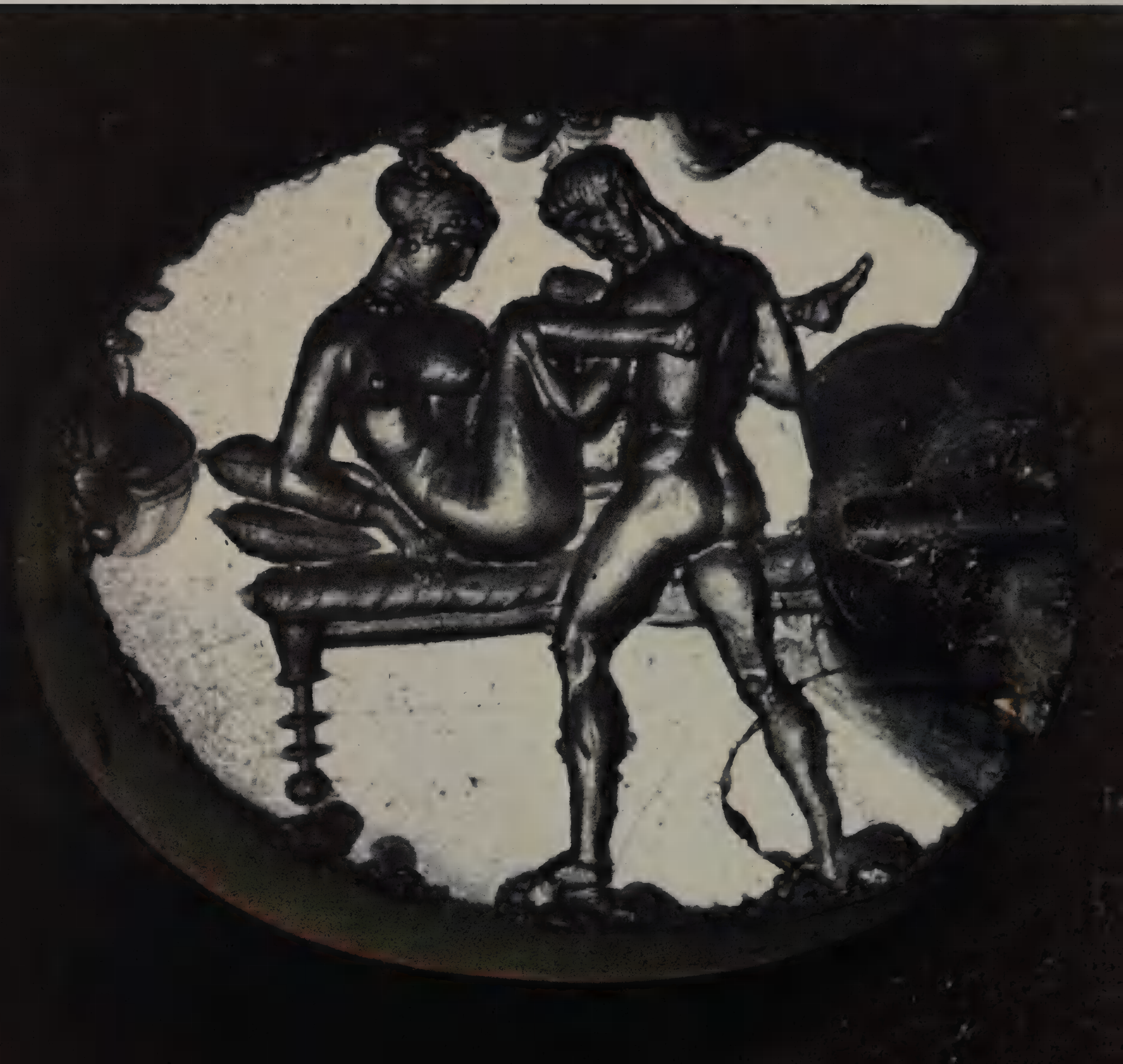
A rare and special feature of this scaraboid is that it is engraved on both sides. The back depicts an eagle on a thunderbolt.

GEM WITH EROTIC SCENE
Scaraboid, blue chalcedony, from
Damanhour.
Early fourth century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts;
donated by E. P. Warren (LHG 60).
W. 0.026 m

▪ GEM WITH EROTIC SCENE

There are not many representations of love-making in Greek art between the ends of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., although we know that Parrhasius liked to depict the amorous relations of heroes and heroines of mythology. The fine engraving of this gem, which is attributed to the Ionian area, and the remarkable stylistic skill shown in the particularly complicated composition – in fact the figures are arranged diagonally in terms of the viewer and seem to break into the background – leads us to suppose perhaps that the pictorial motif was derived from those of Parrhasius himself.

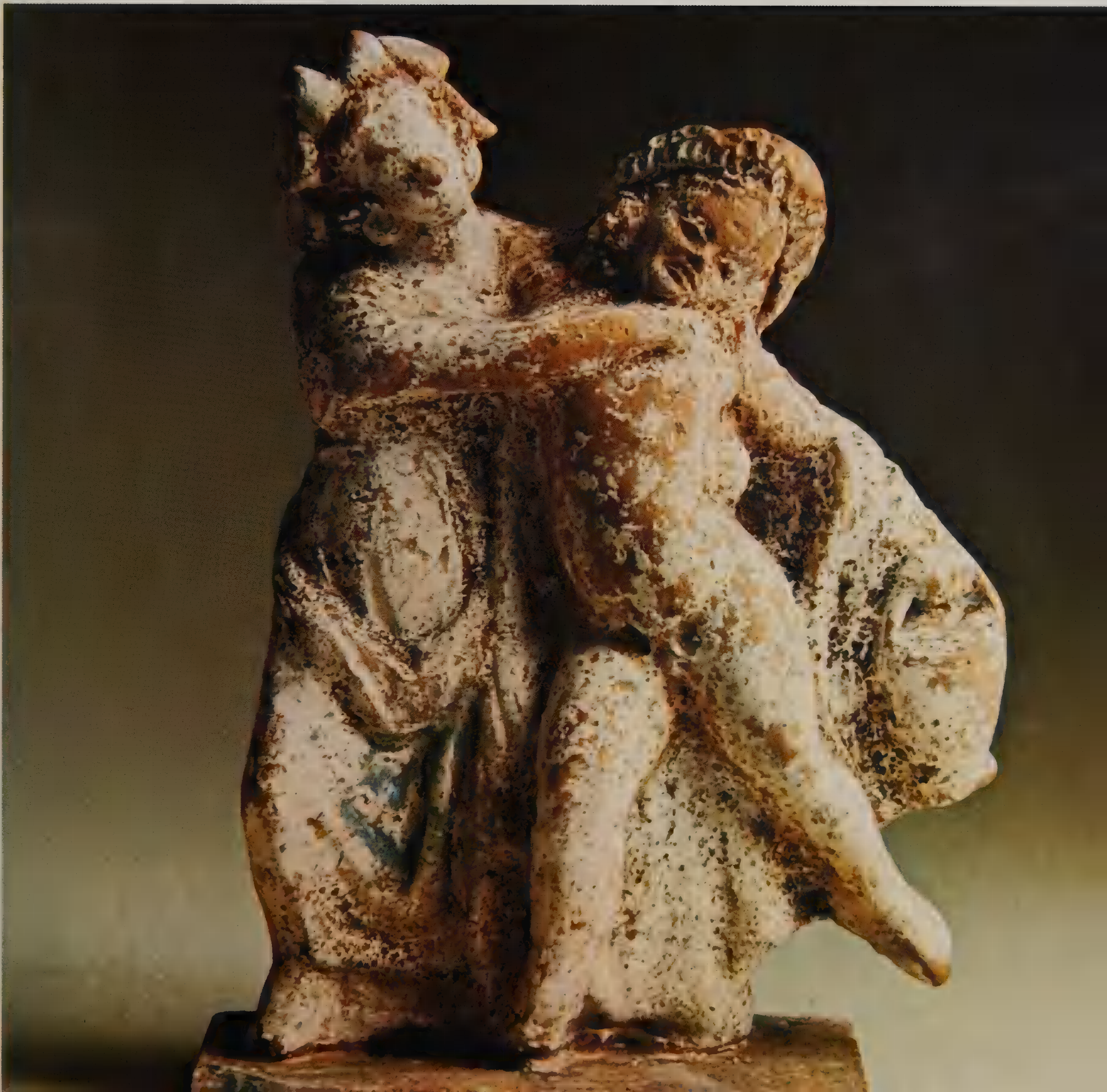
GEM WITH EROTIC SCENE
Scaraboid, discoloured chalcedony, from Tripolis in the Peloponnesus.
Fourth century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (LHG 63).
W. 0.023 m



'JACK AND JILL'
Terracotta, from Aegina.
Third century B.C.
London: British Museum (C 41).
H. 0.13 m

▪ 'JACK AND JILL'

A girl, with chiton and himation which falls around her legs, is drawing to her a boy, half-naked, wearing a short mantle and a wreath, who is trying to free himself from her grasp; the boy has a bucket in his hand. It has been thought that this is a light-hearted elaboration of the myth of Hylas, a hero who was perhaps originally from Mysia. Herakles fell in love with him and took him with him on the expedition of the Argonauts to find the Golden Fleece, but during a brief stop Hylas, who had gone ashore to get water, was carried off from the fountain by a nymph. The theme was widely repeated in the ancient world and was one of the favourite subjects of Greece and Rome.



▪ APHRODITE AND ADONIS

This mirror support is of particular interest, not only for its subject but also for its form and elegant decoration. It consists of a rectangular frame. In the centre Adonis, in hunting boots, is kneeling, his head turned towards Aphrodite who hovers in flight behind him. The goddess has caught the young man under his left arm and is lifting him into the air. The movement is emphasised by Aphrodite's broad cloak fastened at her shoulders and spreading out into the field of the mirror support.

This unusual scene is one of many depicting mortals carried off by the gods of Olympus. The usual subjects are Eos and Kephalos, Zeus and Ganymede, Poseidon and Amymone. There are indeed no other specific examples of the rape of Adonis as depicted on this mirror support, but in a passage of the *Menaechmi* (lines 143–4) Plautus mentions a mural on the same subject. If, as seems likely, Plautus drew on the Attic New Comedy, then the motif must have been in existence already by the fourth century B.C.

In fact this mirror must be dated around the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third centuries. It is probably Italian in origin, from one of the Greek cities of South Italy, perhaps from Locri which was famous for the manufacture of bronze mirrors in the fifth century, or from Tarentum which from the fourth century was completely independent of the rest of Magna Graecia artistically.

▪ *CAPITOLINE VENUS*

The *Capitoline Venus* is a liberal adaptation inspired by the *Aphrodite Cnidia* of Praxiteles. By a strange but comprehensible twist of fate, only poor and even dreadful copies of this statue, perhaps the most famous of antiquity, have survived. This is because it was not possible to make casts of the original, in view of the extremely delicate colours with which it was painted. Without the casts copyists obviously had to base their work only on other copies, or pictures, if they were lucky, or on their memory. In any case the beauty of the *Aphrodite Cnidia* lay in the way its surfaces had been rendered. These were impossible for any ordinary craftsmen to imitate. And, it must be observed that the *Aphrodite Cnidia* was a cult statue, and as such its nudity was ritual, not profane as was later imagined erroneously. The goddess was represented just about to immerse herself in the waters of purification, within a small round shrine.

The goddess's bath of purification may be known to us also in the famous relief of the *Ludovisi Throne*, which is of the first half of the fifth century. We know from literary sources that some cult statues of goddesses were immersed in purifying waters, with a rigorous ritual.

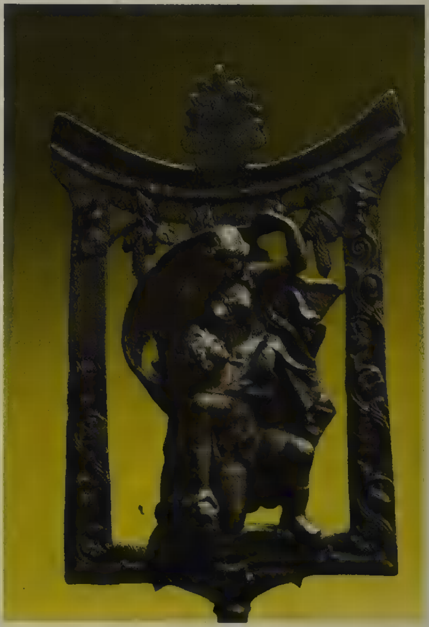
Greek sculpture remained a deeply religious matter, though with changing values, at least until the birth of the Hellenistic monarchies when, with the creation of refined and aristocratic courts and the emergence of a class of rich landowners and merchants, what one might call a bourgeoisie, Greek art lost its role as a religious and ethical expression of the city-state in order to fulfil the precise requirements of patrons rather further removed from the Classical spirit and traditions.

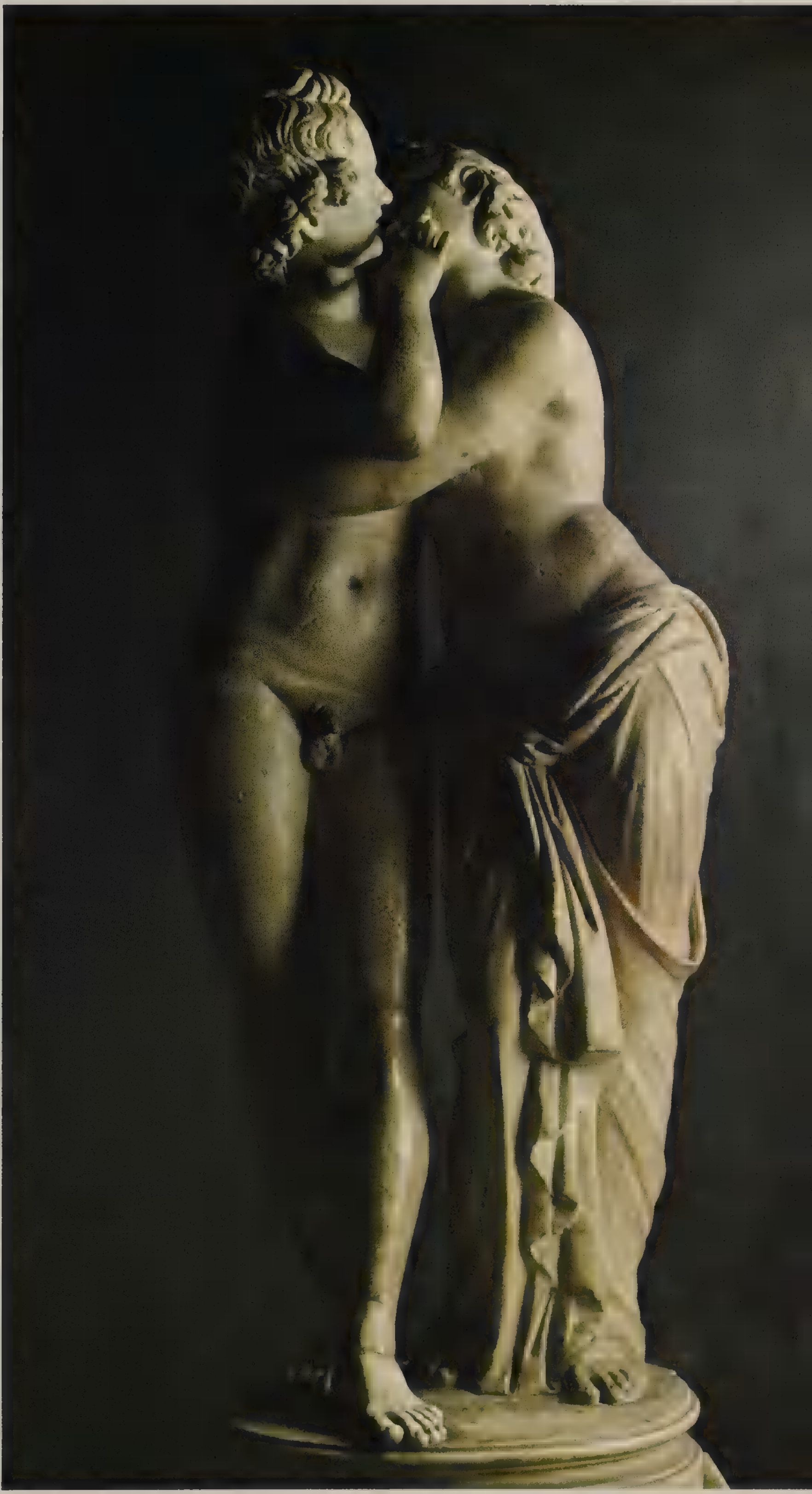
In this atmosphere were born works like the *Capitoline Venus,* a decorative and profane version of the *Aphrodite Cnidia*, as can easily be seen from the more artful deliberation of the body and the arrangement of the hair which repeats,

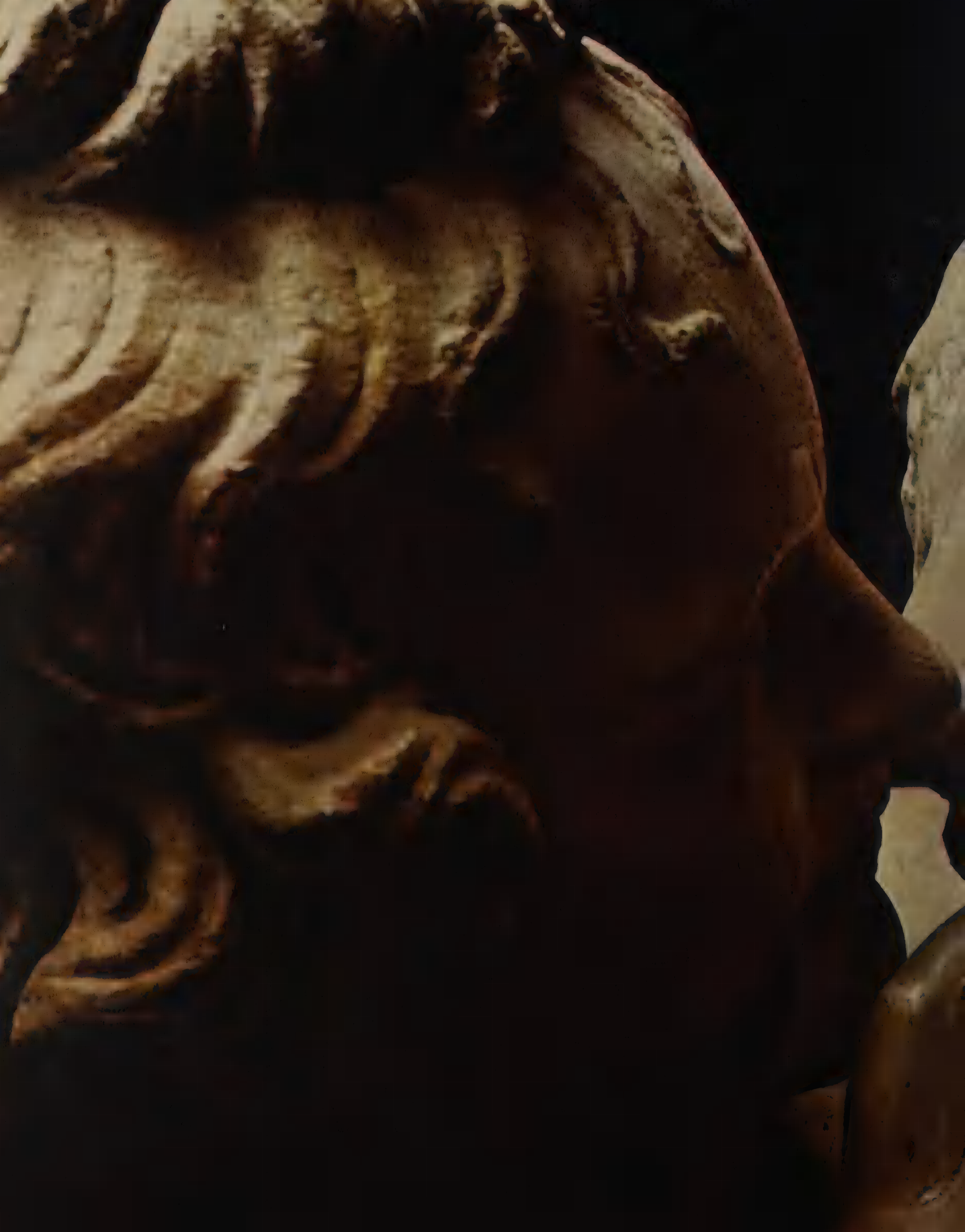
Opposite page: left
CAPITOLINE VENUS
Marble.
Discovered under the church of S. Vitale at Rome between the Quirinal and the Viminal. Roman copy of a Greek original of the third or second century B.C.
Rome: Capitoline Museum (409).
H. 1.93 m

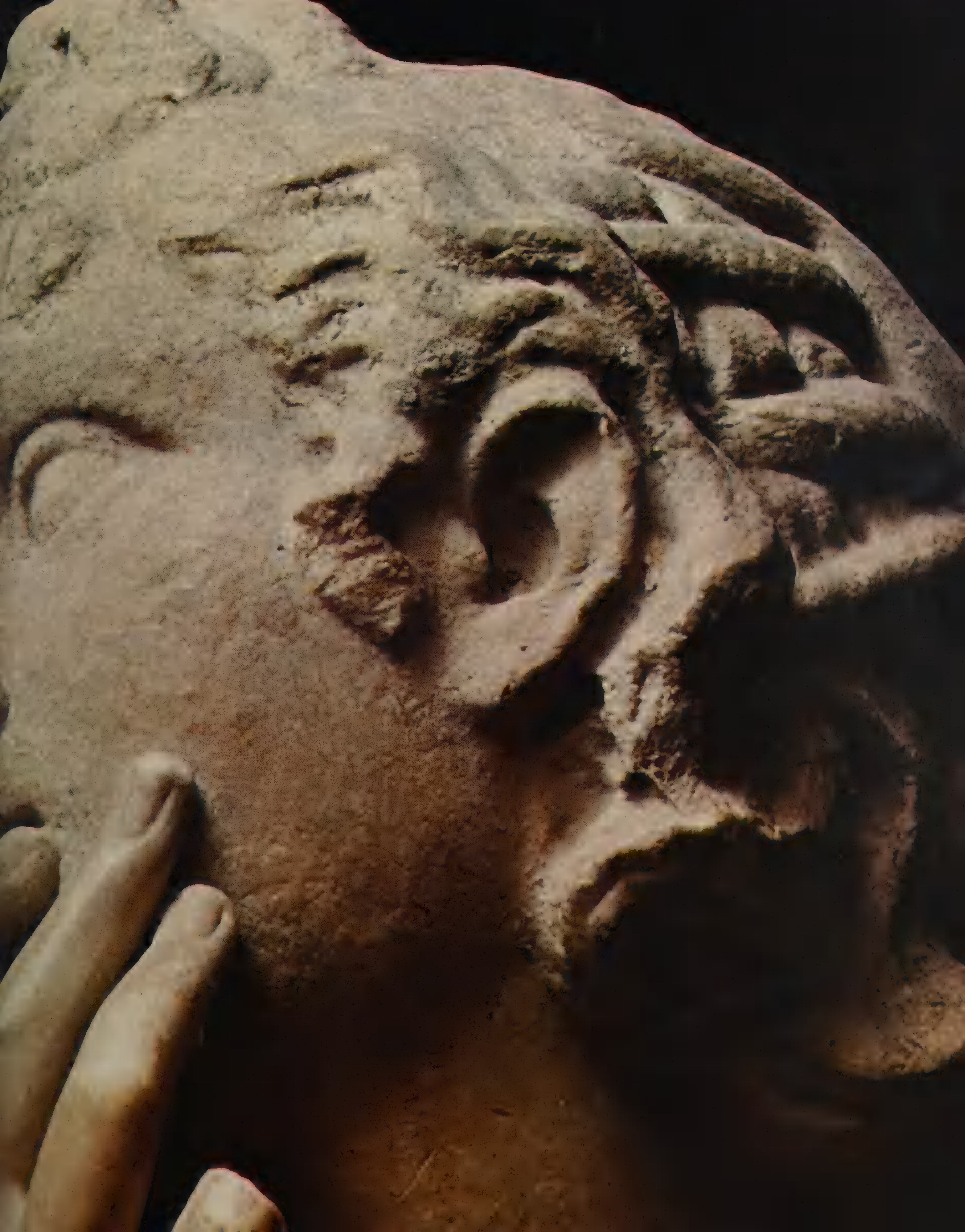
Right and pages 144–5
EROS AND PSYCHE
Marble.
From Rome, the Aventine Hill, near the church of S. Balbina.
Rome: Capitoline Museum (408).
H. 1.25 m

APHRODITE AND ADONIS
Bronze mirror support, from Locri (Reggio di Calabria).
Late fourth century B.C.
London: British Museum (303).
H. 0.46 m









though in a more frivolous tone, that of the *Belvedere Apollo*. The *Capitoline Venus* is a Roman copy of the Antonine period after an original of the third or perhaps the second century B.C.

▪ EROS AND PSYCHE *pages 143, 144–5*

In Greek religious symbolism, at least after the fourth century, the myth of Eros and Psyche represented the human spirit illuminated by divine love, the wise man's desire to attain the supreme good, knowledge of the divine. Perhaps under the influence of the doctrines of Pythagoras the soul came to be represented with little butterfly's wings, like a chrysalis emerging from its cocoon. In the Hellenistic period the religious significance may be muted, and Eros and Psyche shown as two children at play. Often Eros tears Psyche's wings or the girl ties up the god with a rope. Our group is of this period; one of many copies of a very popular original. Eros kisses Psyche tenderly and she in turn embraces her companion. From the style of the faces and its subject-matter this group is in the style called 'Antique Rococo' by the archaeologist W. Klein, who intended thus to define the artful grace and ironic eroticism apparent in some works of eighteenth-century Europe.

Critical research has shown that the group of sculptures referred to does not have at all a unified character, and that the stylistic differences cannot always be explained by their being products of different periods. Thus, this group which, in its marked verticality, allows only one main viewpoint, from the front, is probably contemporary with the Satyr and Hermaphrodite which has no single viewpoint. The smiling faces and the decidedly epigrammatic tone of the composition and theme stop us from placing the Eros and Psyche in a different period. The second half of the second century seems the correct date.

In a third phase, at the rise of Christianity, the myth of Eros and Psyche was reinterpreted and to its original significance was added another, more complex and profound. Psyche, punished for disobeying the will of her husband in looking at him by the dim light of a candle while he slept, is subjected to long and painful trials before, purified of the error she has committed, she is reunited with Eros on Olympus. The symbolic significance – the soul purified from sin receiving eternal happiness with the help of divine love – is easy to grasp.

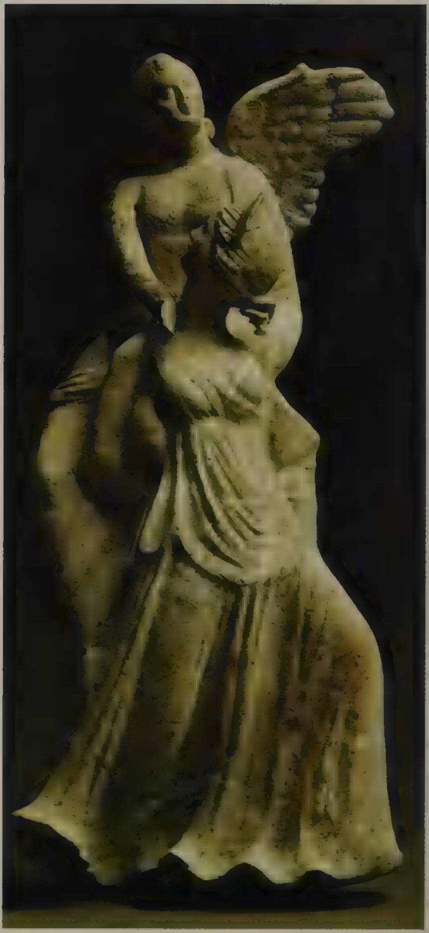
▪ EROS AND GIRL

A girl is moving quickly towards the right, supporting Eros on her back, with his left hand placed on the girl's breast. Her hair is gathered up in a *sphendone* and she is wearing a long robe with overfall (*apoptygma*). The dress appears to be slipping down off her breast which is partially uncovered.

Both this terracotta and the one following come from Centuripe, a Sicilian town on the slopes of Etna. The town reached its zenith in the third and second centuries B.C. when, under the influence of Syracuse and the protection of Rome, it began to produce a long series of terracotta and appliqué vases, often intended for use in funerals. The subject is usually Aphrodite and her circle. Following the changing taste of the period the images lose or conceal their original significance and take on a more frivolous tone, albeit a highly sophisticated and graceful one. That this was not just a change in fashion at Centuripe is testified by the numerous terracottas found at Taranto, at Tanagra in Boeotia and Myrina in Asia Minor, which all developed coroplastic work

EROS AND GIRL
Terracotta, from Centuripe (Sicily).
Third or second century B.C.
London: British Museum (D 19).

EROS AND GIRL
Terracotta, from Centuripe (Sicily).
Third or second century B.C.
London: British Museum (D 21).
H. 0.335 m



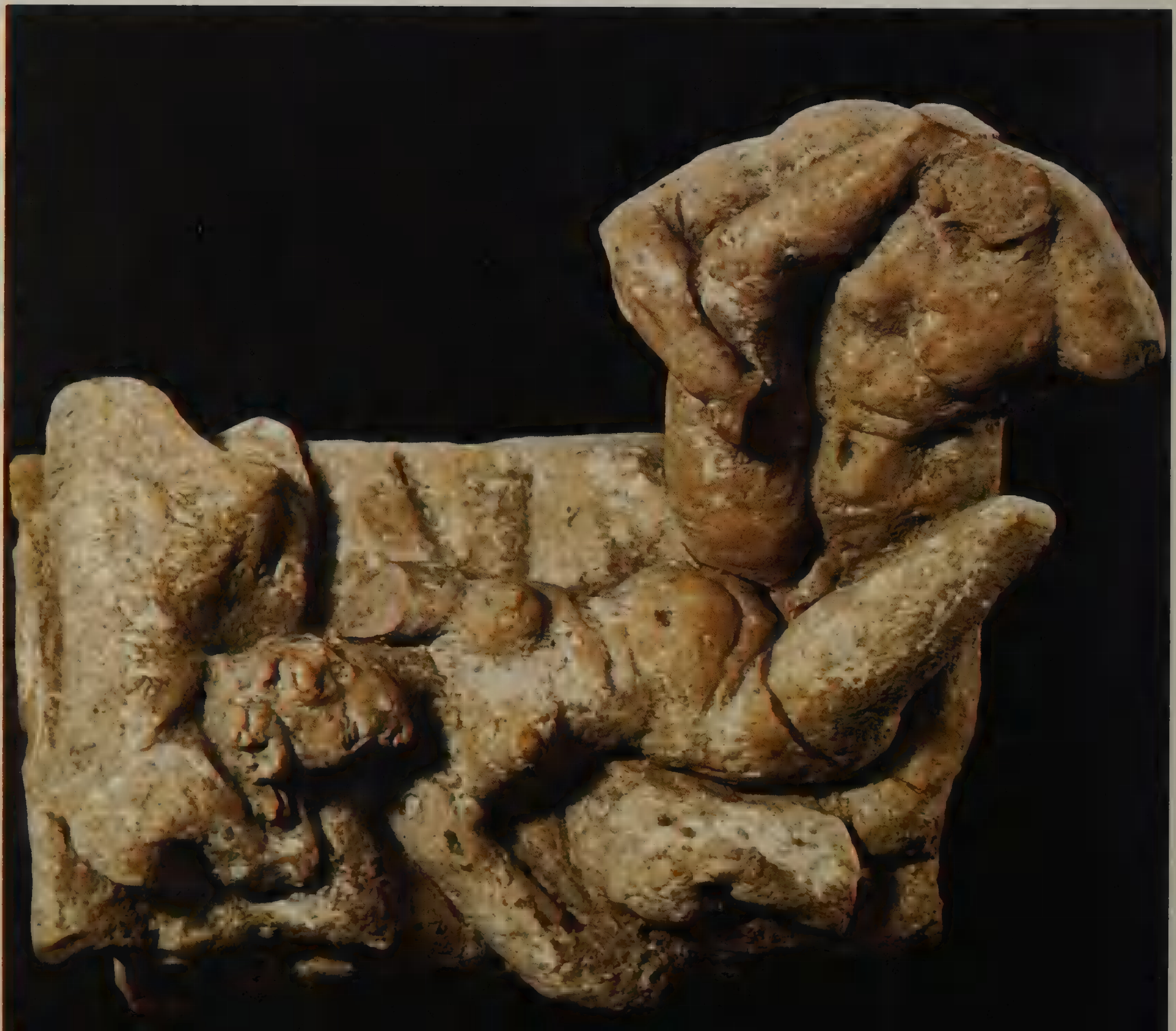
more or less at the same time as Centuripe and in many ways similar to it, even as regards the subject matter. It seems that, with the loss of their civil liberties after Alexander the Great, the Greek city-states abandoned patronage of art for political and religious purposes with a consequent loss of the ethical rigour that it had enjoyed to the middle of the fourth century.

- EROS AND GIRL *page 147*

This piece is very probably an appliqué from a little wooden box. It depicts the head and shoulders of Eros and a girl embracing. Eros has his hand on the girl's breast and she is leaning backwards to kiss him, placing her raised right hand on his head.

- EROTIC GROUP

This terracotta poses many questions. The iconography is common to Greek relief vases but has no counterpart among free-standing works. Among the enormous number of terracottas in the museums of the world there is no other like it. Generally speaking eroticism is an important element in Greek

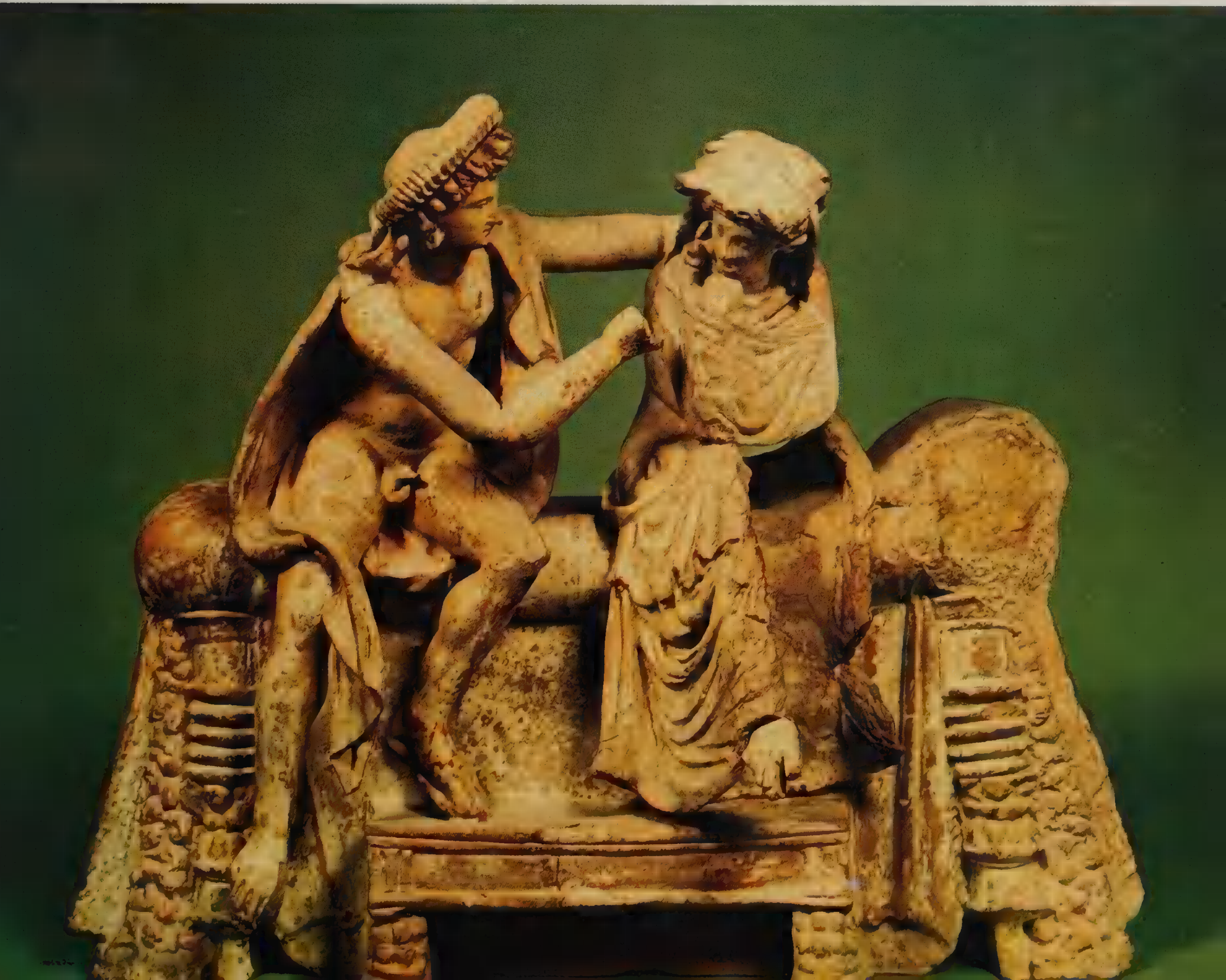


EROTIC GROUP
Terracotta, from Taranto.
Third century B.C.
Taranto: Archaeological Museum.

coroplastic, but the sexual act is hardly ever represented realistically – another indication of the basic scarcity of documentation about Greek culture at our disposal.

From a stylistic point of view this group is differentiated from those of the mid second century by its greater schematic simplicity; it lacks the contrast, the dynamic tension which makes the fascination of such works as the Satyr and Hermaphrodite. Here the general composition, with the successful effect of the naked woman abandoned on a soft bed covered with cushions, can in theory be referred to an earlier period, perhaps even to the third century. On the other hand, this terracotta comes originally from Tarentum and it seems difficult to postulate coroplastic production of such a high level after the defeat that the city suffered during the Second Punic War, towards the end of the third century B.C. We know that the Romans later favoured the port of Brindisium to the detriment of Tarentum, whose economy was thus strangled and which then looked more towards the Greek kingdoms of the Eastern Mediterranean.

One last point: this terracotta has none of the characteristics of mass-



SEATED COUPLE
Terracotta, from Tomb 100, Myrina (Asia Minor).
Second half of second century B.C.
Paris: Louvre (MYR 268 (376)).

production. Despite its bad state of conservation there is a noticeable freshness in the modelling which is not common in routine work. The treatment of the nudes recalls the reliefs in soft stone produced at Tarentum, particularly in the fourth and third centuries B.C.

▪ SEATED COUPLE

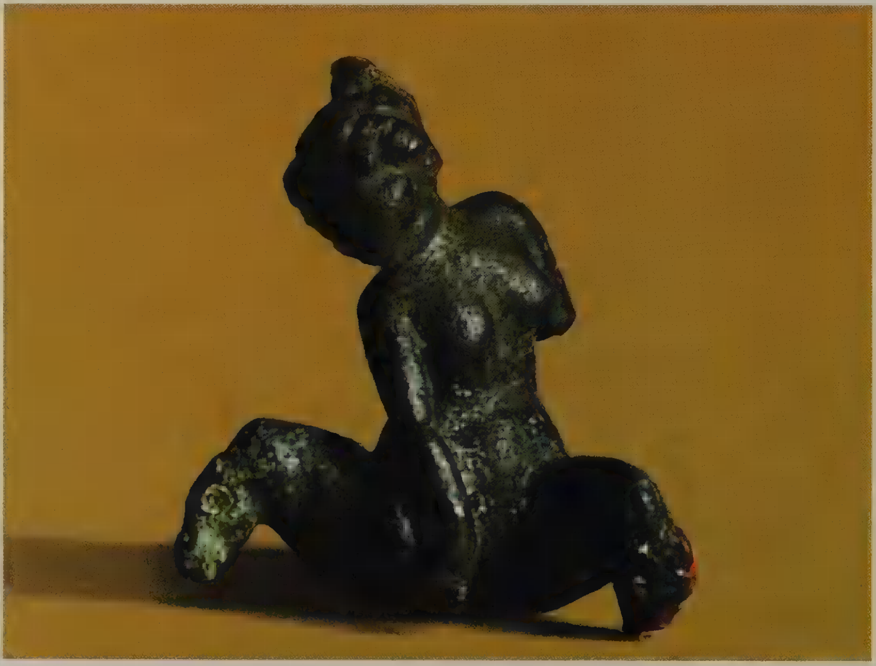
This is one of the few Myrina groups discovered in a clear context with other terracottas, among them a variant of the *Aphrodite Fréjus* signed by the coroplast Varius. This group, on the other hand, can be assigned to Nikostratos who produced another work found in the same tomb, a grotto with nymphs. From a study of the coroplasts' studios which were established at Myrina from the third century B.C. onwards it has been deduced that the tomb was used for a fairly long period of time from the mid second century, when the studio of Nikostratos was in operation, to the first, by which time the coroplasts of Myrina had Roman names. This terracotta depicts a couple seated on a marriage bed. The subtle grace of the scene, with the young man moving gently towards his bride, the girl almost reluctant, still modestly covered by her robe, belongs to the middle Hellenistic period in its most advanced phase. From a stylistic point of view the centripetal composition used for the girl had often been used for a type of Muse, seen in many copies and dated around the mid second century B.C.

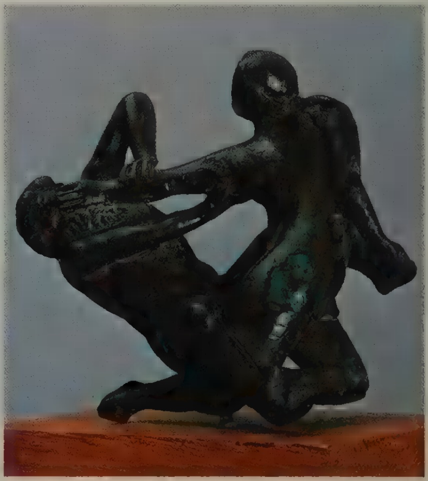
▪ WOMAN CROUCHING

This little bronze may be included with the many depicting satyrs and maenads which were such favourites in ancient Greece. A naked woman – a nymph ? – is bending over with her legs apart, her right arm between her thighs, her left supporting her on the ground or, more likely on a rock. Her body is twisted round, her head seems to be turned to watch a companion behind her.

This bronze is obviously part of an erotic group, close kin in its subject to the

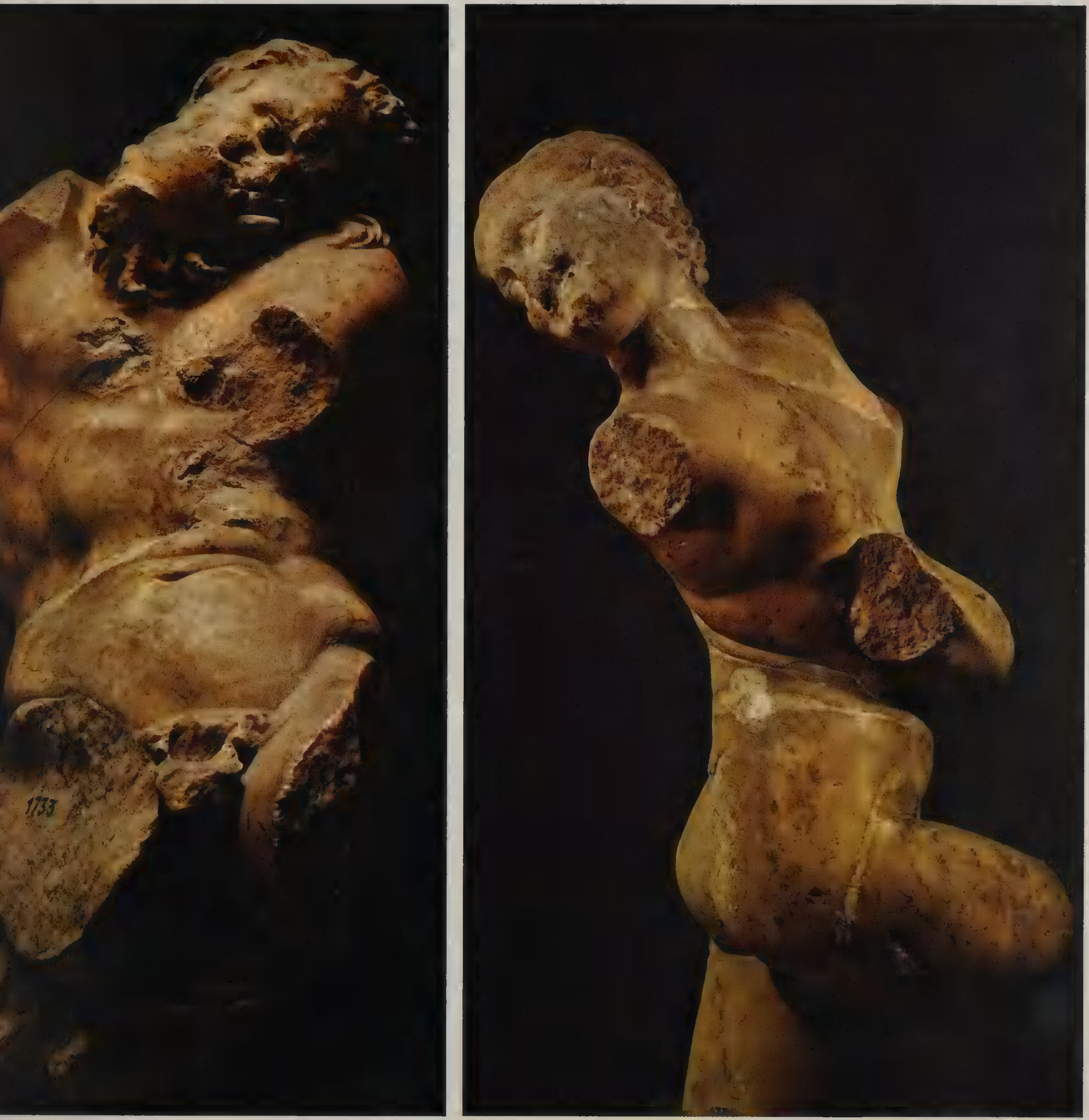
SATYR AND HERMAPHRODITE
Bronze.
Bonn: Akademisches
Kunstmuseum der Universität
(C 637)





WOMAN CROUCHING
Bronze.
Third or second century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts:
donated by E. P. Warren
(Res. 08.32f). H. 0.031 m

groups of satyrs and hermaphrodites or satyrs and nymphs. The taste for complex compositions, lacking a single main viewpoint but in fact offering many such views, is characteristic of Greek art of the third and second centuries B.C. Within these limits it is difficult to date the work more precisely because of the confusion of many different artistic currents in the same period. But, as has



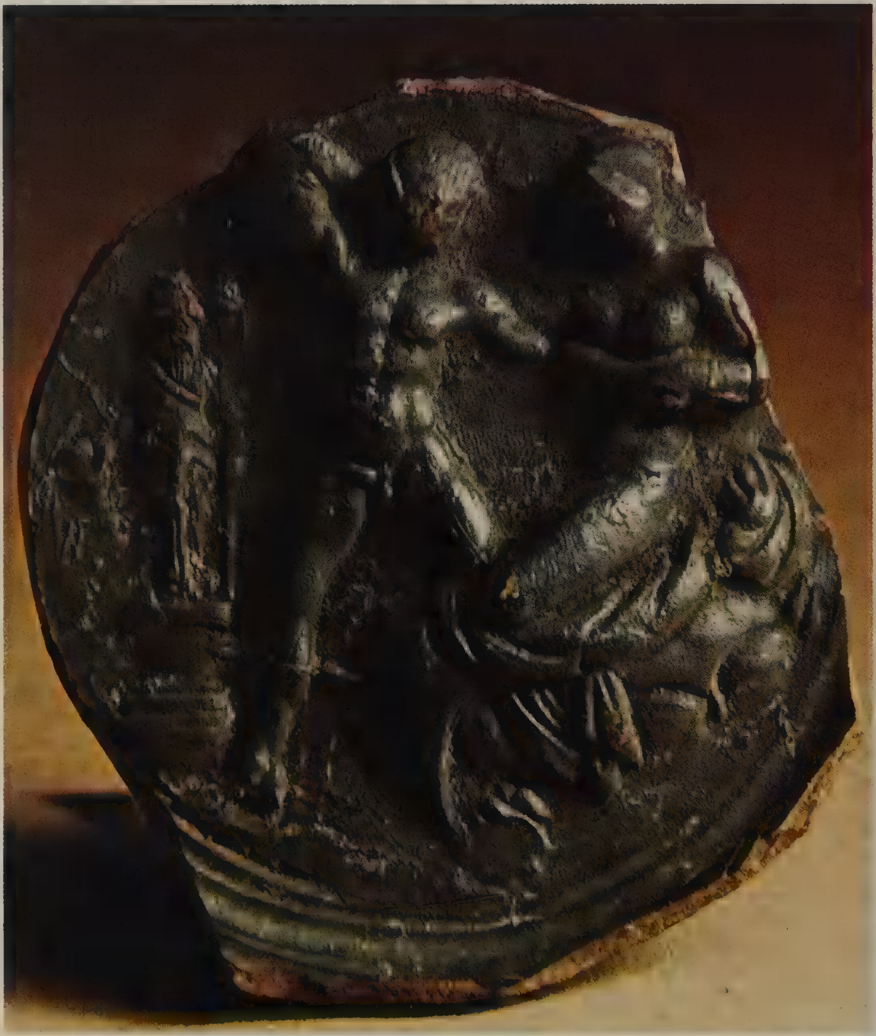
SATYR AND HERMAPHRODITE
Fragments of a marble sculpture, after a Greek original of second century B.C.
Rome: Barracco Museum.

already been remarked, the taste for scenes of this type may link it to Asia Minor of the second half of the second century, and it may have been created as a malicious and ironical reply to the tragic pathos of Pergamene sculpture. The way in which the woman in this bronze has her hair arranged – the so-called melon style with a bun at the neck – corresponds completely with the fashions of the mid second century B.C.

• SATYR AND HERMAPHRODITE: BRONZE AND MARBLE

pages 150, 151

A young hermaphrodite is trying to escape from the embrace of an ithyphallic satyr who is holding him tightly and drawing him close. In the marble, even better than in the bronze statuette, we can see that the hermaphrodite is not in the least frightened; indeed he is laughing cunningly and turning towards the satyr with a complicated movement that accentuates the fleeting quality of the composition. It has been supposed that, like others of this type, the subject is drawn from a painting. The problem is not an easy one to solve because, by its very nature, painting presents a single angle of vision while sculpture, set in space, allows the viewer to see the work from many points of view. Such is the

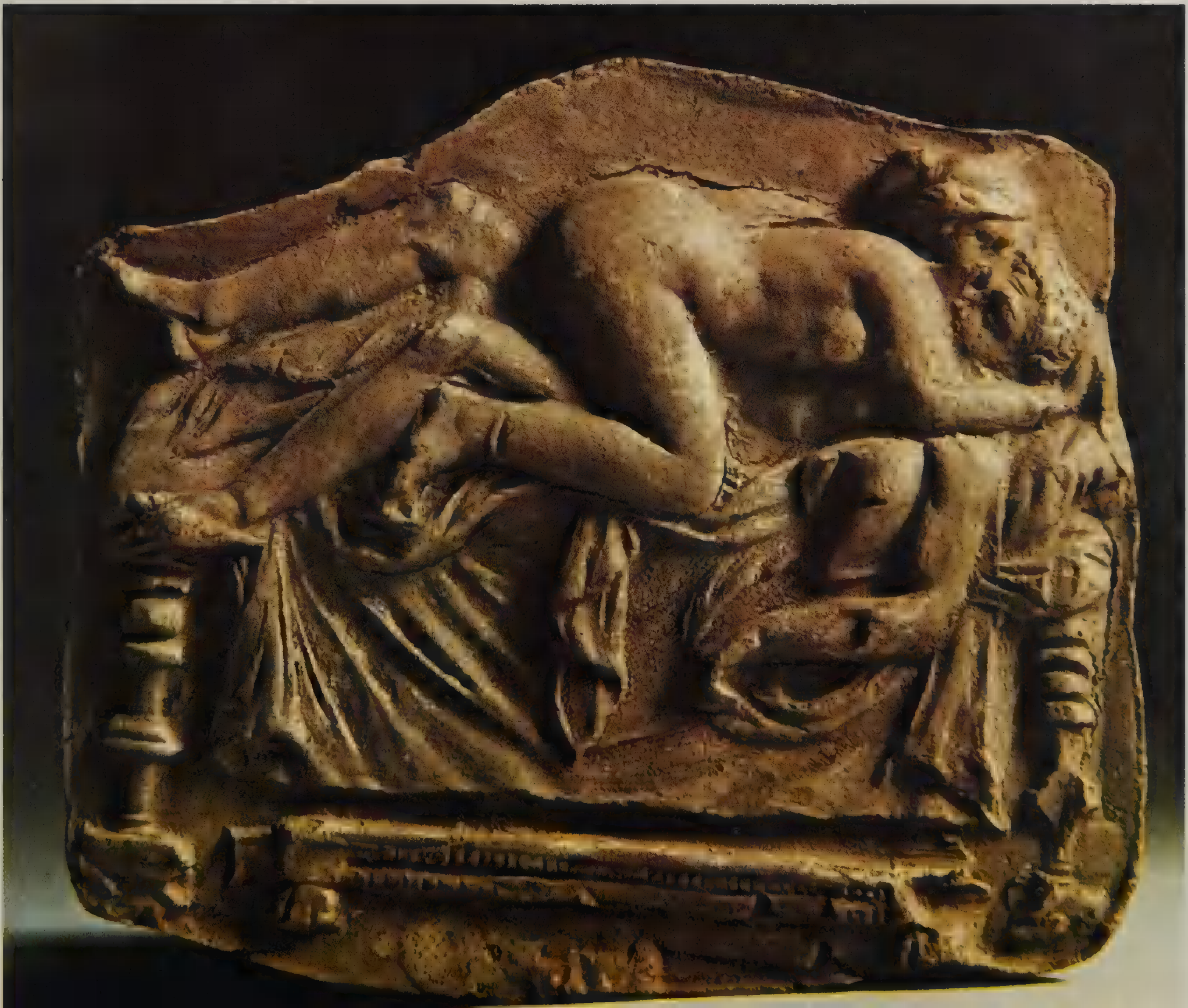


HERMAPHRODITE SEDUCING A SATYR
Fragment of a Calene relief vase.
Second century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (Res. 08.33i). W. 0.08 m

case with this group, which is completely based on the unstable balance of the two bodies which seem to split the spatial field into its three dimensions. As with the similar subject of the satyr and the nymph we are moving within a Hellenistic milieu, perhaps in Asia Minor.

▪ HERMAPHRODITE SEDUCING A SATYR

A special group of black-painted vases takes its name, Calene, from the place where it was produced, Cales, a town in Campania which was particularly prosperous in the Hellenistic period. One can distinguish at least three basic types of vase: dishes with an internal medallion decorated in relief; mesomphallic *phialae* (cups) in which the figure decoration is on the interior; and *gutti* (pourers), with medallions figured in relief. A hermaphrodite, on the right, is drawing towards him a young ithyphallic satyr who, for his part, is attempting to release himself from the hold. On the left is the image of a god in a long robe, a thyrsus in his left hand and a vase in his right. In its centrifugal scheme the scene is particularly well constructed and seems to be an ironic reply to the marble group of the Satyr and Hermaphrodite where the situation is reversed.



HETAERA AND YOUTH
Model for the mould of a Pergamene vase, bought in Greece. Second century B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (Res. 08.33a).

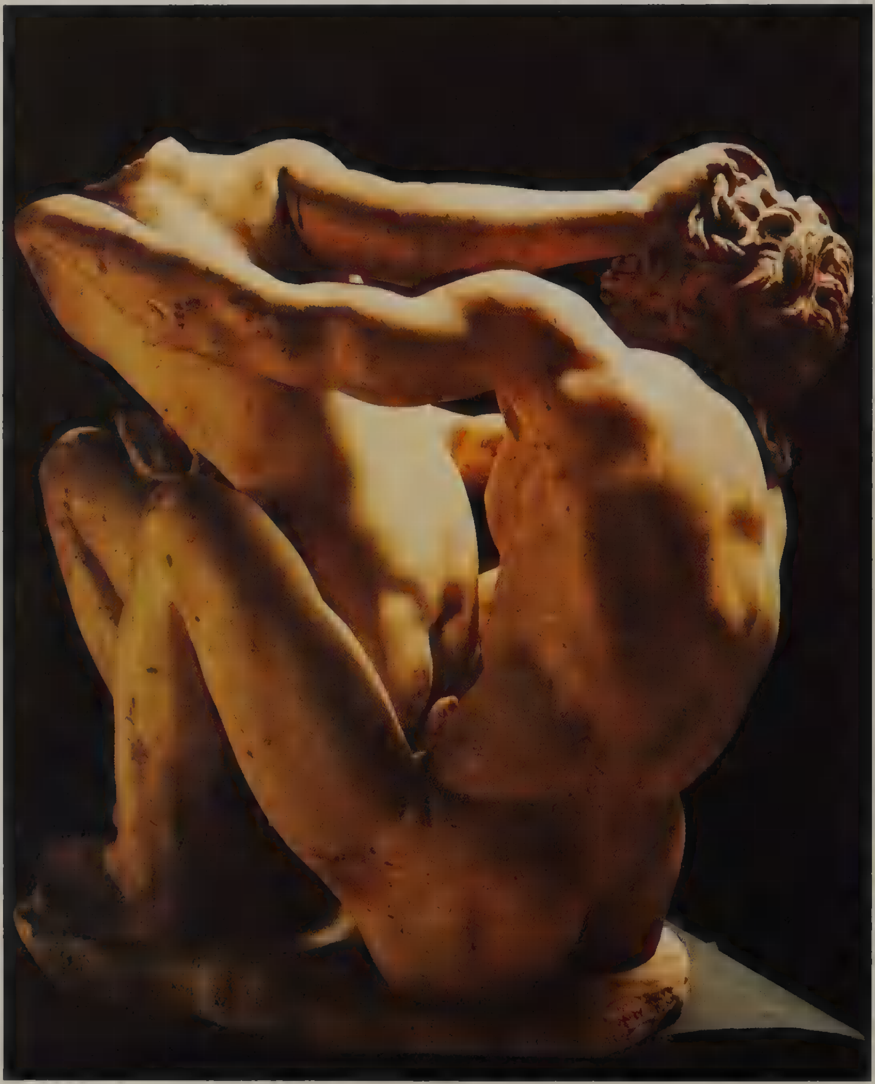
• HETAERA AND YOUTH

This is the model for the mould for a black-painted Pergamene vase with decoration in relief, almost certainly made in Pergamum. Nor is there much doubt that it dates from the second half of the second century B.C., bearing in mind, however, that more study is required on Greek vases of this class. At the present time we know of at least six different erotic schemes used on Pergamene vases, drawn perhaps from the famous pornographic treatise of Philaenis, an authoress of the fourth century from Leukas who seems, among other things, to have been one of Ovid's favourite sources for his *Ars Amatoria*.

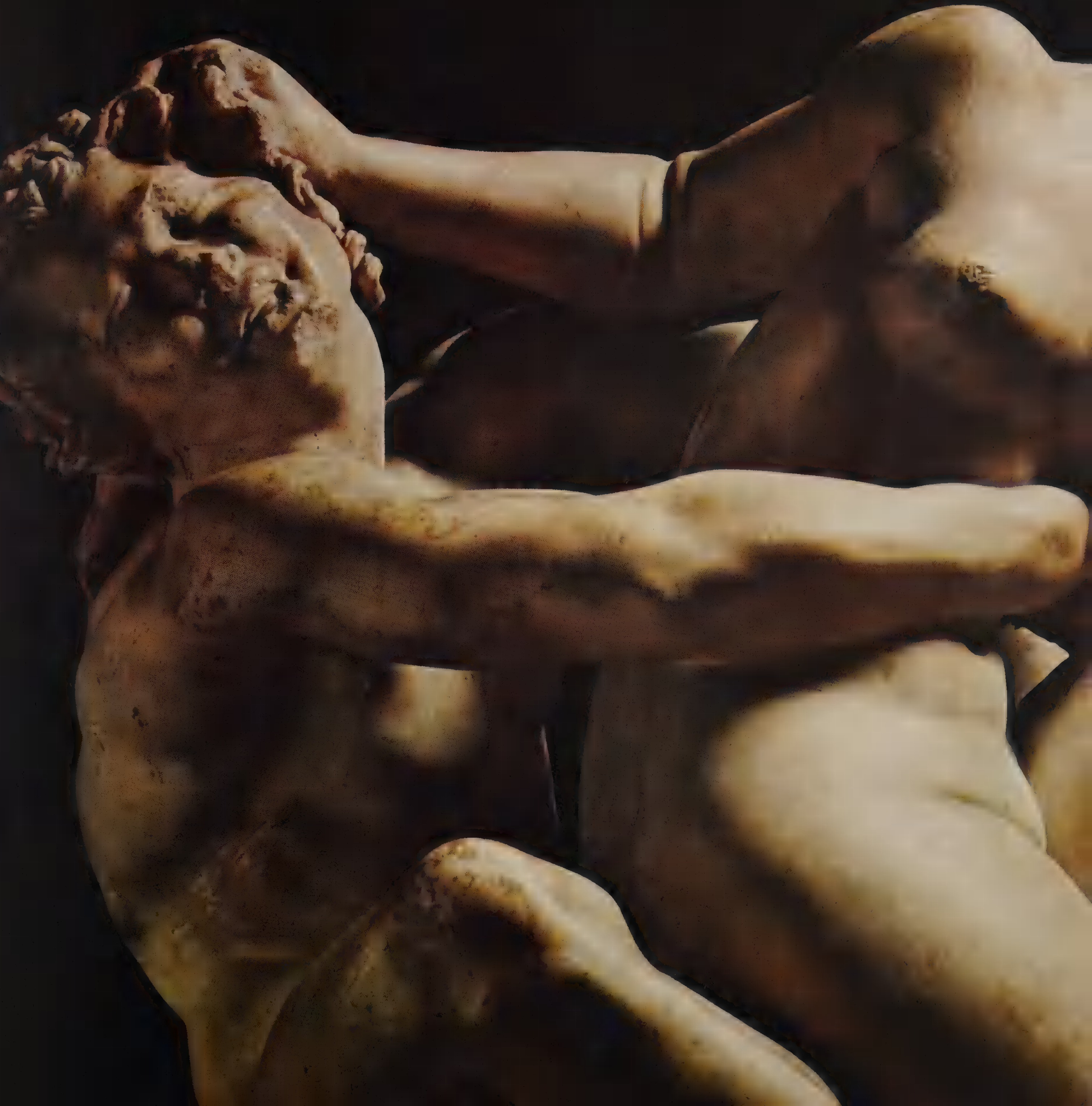
It is worth mentioning that some students hold that Pergamene vases are a link between the Greek and Roman production of relief wares and of that special red-gloss pottery which is generally called *terra sigillata*.

• SATYR AND NYMPH

This group too is part of a series of works from the mid second century B.C., all with an erotic intent. Their subjects are generally satyrs, nymphs and

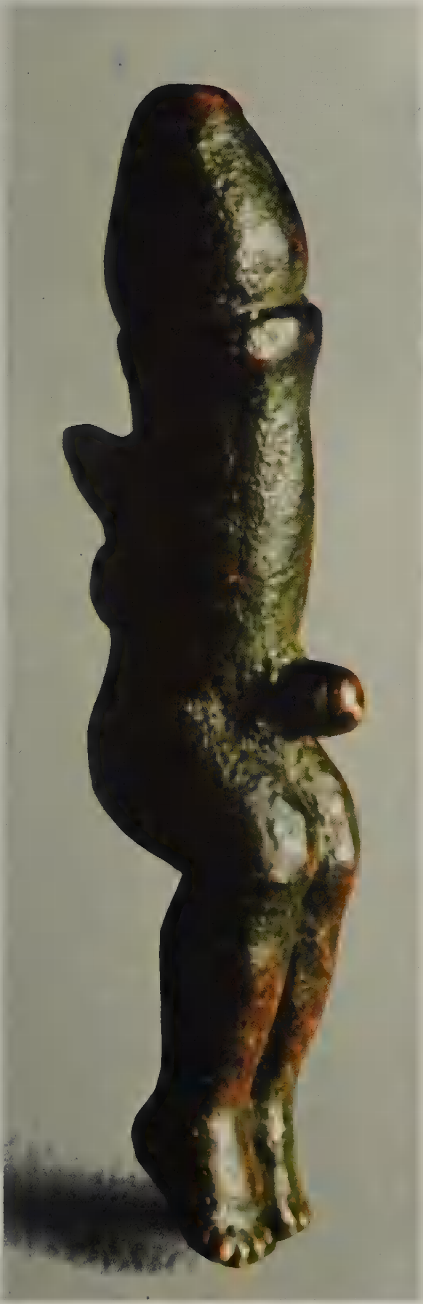


SATYR AND NYMPH
Marble, from Rome, Trastevere (San Crisogono).
Second century B.C.
Rome: Museo Nuovo dei Conservatori (1729). H. 0.60 m



HERAKLES AND NYMPH
Fragments of a marble relief. Once in the Coll. Barracco, Rome.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts (08.34d). H. 0.40 m

PHALLUS WITH HUMAN LEGS
Bronze.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (Res. 08.32o). H. 0.044 m



hermaphrodites. The theme is treated with great elegance and the composition carefully planned: a centrifugal scheme more simple than that of the Satyr and Hermaphrodite. Here, too, the faces portray a cunning complicity which leads us to suppose real connivance between attacker and attacked. Other copies of this group have survived.

• HERAKLES AND NYMPH

As well as representing the labours of Herakles, a particular favourite in the Greek world – we think of the metopes in the temple of Zeus at Olympia, where they are pervaded by a profound religious spirit – the Greeks sometimes depicted other scenes from the hero's life, taken from his numerous amorous adventures. This taste for piquant or malicious vignettes finds its most exact counterpart in the epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology*.

It must be noted that such subjects lent themselves especially to the depiction of milieux, whether domestic interiors or country scenes, which were particularly in vogue as decoration for houses and gardens. This relief represents Herakles as a young man with, it would appear, a nymph. A large cloth is stretched across the background, its corners tied to two trees, to protect the couple from the indiscreet glances of passers-by, but the sculptor was not lacking in cunning because obviously his spectator is watching the scene from this side of the screen. On the right a little statue of Priapus on a pillar completes the picture. Though certainly Roman, as is shown by marks in Herakles' hair, the relief is copied from a Greek work. The use of a cloth as a background, above which rise trees and buildings, is found in another Greek relief which was very frequently copied by the Romans and which represented Dionysos arriving with satyrs as a guest in the house of Icarius.

• PHALLUS WITH HUMAN LEGS

This curious bronze, obviously a charm against the evil eye, consists of an upper part shaped like an erect phallus and a lower part like human legs. It is one of many apotropaic objects of which numerous examples have survived from at least the sixth century on: animated phalli, mainly birds with their heads in the form of a phallus. It is supposed that such bronzes originated in the Hellenistic Greek cities of the Eastern Mediterranean basin: Miletus, Smyrna and Alexandria. These charms were greatly favoured by the Romans and most of those we have are of Roman origin.

The magical power attributed to the representation of the phallus goes back to the Neolithic period and is easy to understand. As an agent of fertility the phallus represents the life-force of nature.

• HERAKLES AND OMPHALE

pages 158, 160, 161 above

These three gems depict the loves of Herakles and Omphale. According to a legend dating back to the fifth century B.C. the latter was the wife of Tmolos, from whom she inherited the kingdom of Lydia. Herakles entered her service and became her lover. By him Omphale had one or more sons from whom descended the royal family of Sardis.

The Hellenistic era seems to have had a lively interest in the loves of its heroes. In the story of Herakles and Omphale the attraction must have been the way that Herakles was dressed as a woman and the Queen dressed in the hero's lionskin. This motif was very old and common to many heroes, the most important and best known of them being Achilles, who also dressed as a woman, in hiding on Skyros. Recent research in the world of mythography and religion has shown that for men to dress as women and vice versa is often an element in initiation ceremonies that mark the passage from puberty to adulthood, dramatised with rites that correspond to what one might call the Law of Symmetrical Inversion. At their marriage ceremonies the women of Argos disguised themselves with a false beard, according to Herodotus; at the same time the men of Argos had to be completely clean-shaven.

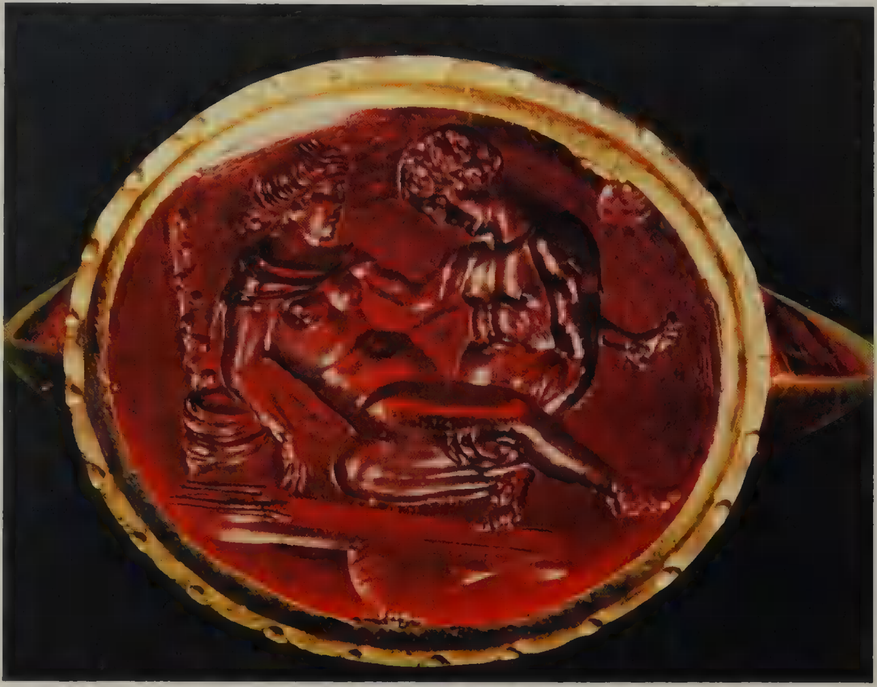
These three gems are closely linked stylistically to the Neo-Attic reliefs and can be thus attributed to the second half of the first century B.C. Note that in a series of similar scenes Herakles ranges from a young man to a fully grown adult; this is a very common feature in Greek art.

SIREN AND COUNTRYMAN
Fragments of a marble relief, acquired in Paris.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts; donated by E. P. Warren (08.34c).
H. 0.40 m

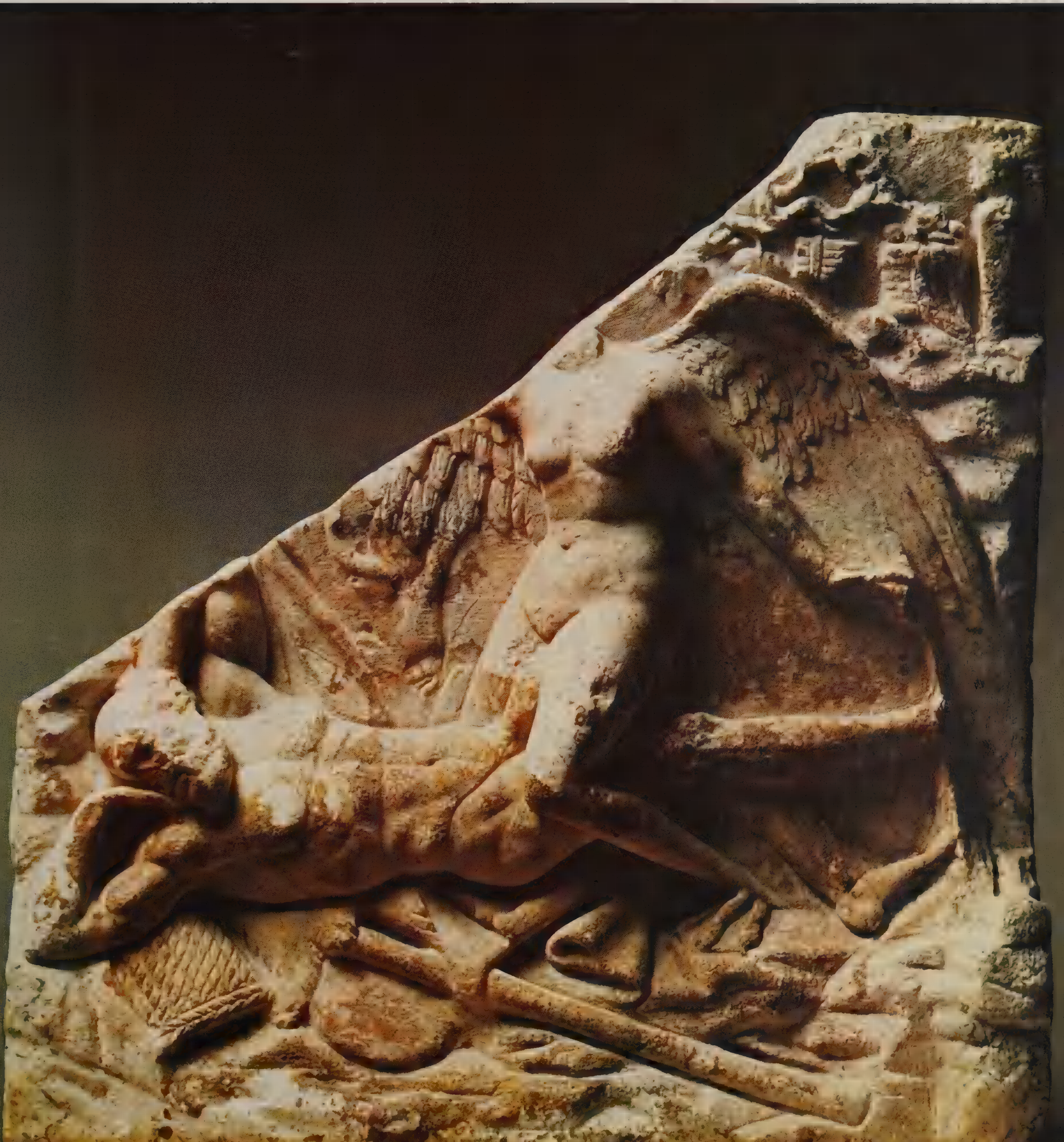
▪ SIREN AND COUNTRYMAN

This relief may be one of the earliest representations of dreams in art. A naked female figure with wings has descended on to an elderly shepherd, naked and ithyphallic, sleeping with his arms behind his head. There are a number of touches showing the rustic setting: a little herm on the right; a vine with rich foliage from which hang Pan-pipes (*syrinx*); an animal skin on which the shepherd is lying; a long staff in the foreground. The winged figure is pouring a liquid on to the ground from the cup that she holds in her left hand; it may be a sleeping draught or simply wine. There is controversy as to the interpretation. She may be a siren coming to the shepherd to grant him sleep and love, or she may be the realisation of the shepherd's own dream.

This picture is one of a series of reliefs generally considered Hellenistic or of Hellenistic inspiration because in them, in accord with the Greek artistic tradition of seeking perspective illusion, its composition has a real spatial value. That is, it is no longer a question of showing solid bodies against a neutral



HERAKLES AND OMPHALE
Cornelian intaglio.
Second half of first century B.C.
Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum (IX B 1560).



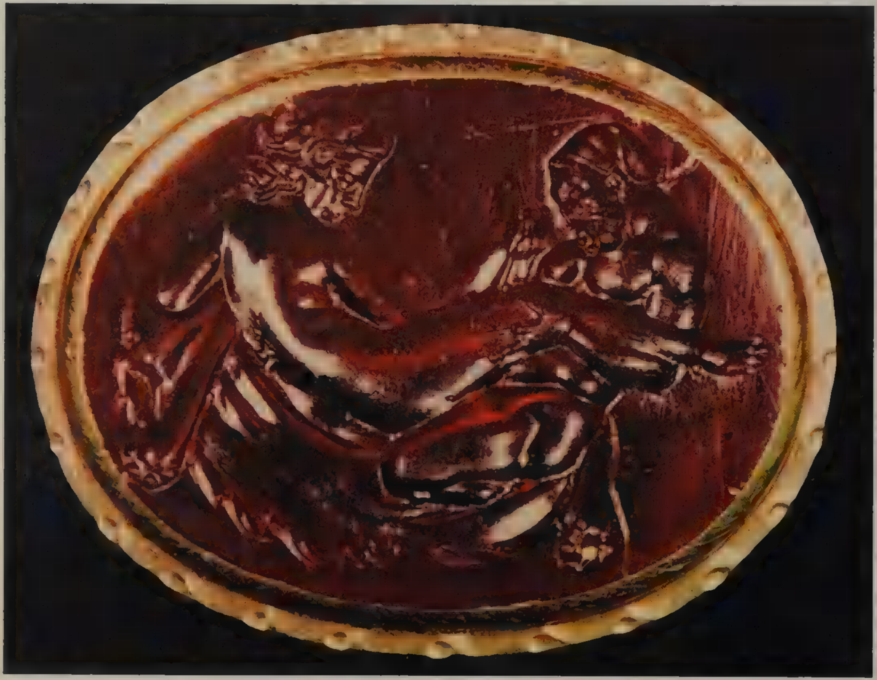
background but of composing them organically in space. Attempts at this are frequent in Hellenistic art and it is thus reasonable to assign to this period even reliefs which, like this, seem rather to be Roman in production. By a fortunate coincidence in this case a version only a little different has survived in a plaster cast found at Begram in Afghanistan. It seems very likely that these casts were taken from moulds of works of first- or second-century Alexandrian toreutic art. The Boston relief is a poorer version of the Begram cast but they seem to derive from a common prototype, perhaps Alexandrian.

▪ HERAKLES AND EROS

Herakles, leaning against a rock, turns his head towards Eros who is tying his hands behind his back. This scene is one of many referring to the loves of Herakles which were a favourite subject in both the Greek and Roman periods. The reason for this lies in antiquity's great taste for contrasts; Herakles the champion, victor over the greatest dangers, is defeated in his turn by the power of love. There may also have been some satisfaction for this capable artist in contrasting the robust, solid body of the hero with the slender and fluid figure of the winged youth.

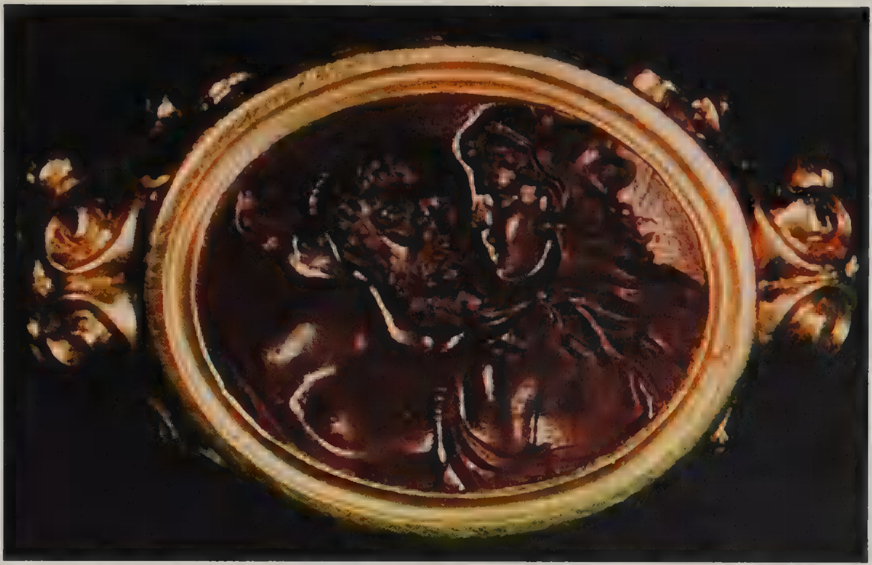
▪ HERAKLES AND NYMPH *page 162*

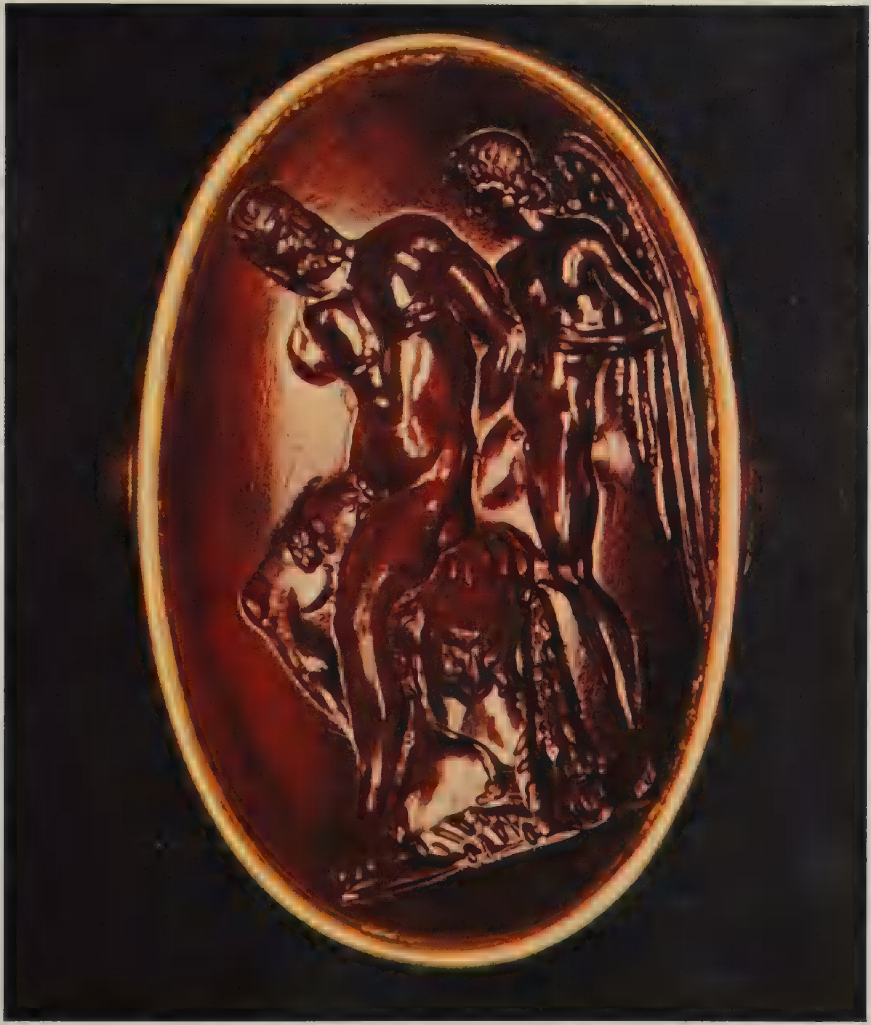
The gemstone is signed by the artist Teukros. Herakles, seated on a rock on which he has put down his lionskin, is drawing towards him a woman, a nymph apparently, or perhaps Iole: her right arm is raised to keep her robe from falling. An engraver named Teukros is mentioned by Pliny as one of the last who produced fine work of this type. His gems were much sought after by the sophisticated aristocracy of the early Empire, by whom they were highly prized. From the Florence amethyst we can deduce that the artist Teukros was



HERAKLES AND OMPHALE
Cornelian intaglio.
Second half of first century B.C.
Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum
(IX B 1364).

HERAKLES AND OMPHALE
Cornelian intaglio.
Second half of first century B.C.
Vienna : Kunsthistorisches Museum
(IX B 1365).





HERAKLES AND EROS
Cornelian intaglio.
Vienna : Kunsthistorisches Museum
(IX B 656).

Neo-Attic and deeply imbued with Classical culture; his work was part of the cultural background that expressed the new ideals of the Augustan Age. Once the upsetting events of the Civil War were past, imperial policy tended to favour the growth of a cultivated Court school of art, drawing on Greek culture of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

The Arretine relief cups are very close in style to the intaglio of the Florence amethyst.

- EROTIC SCENE

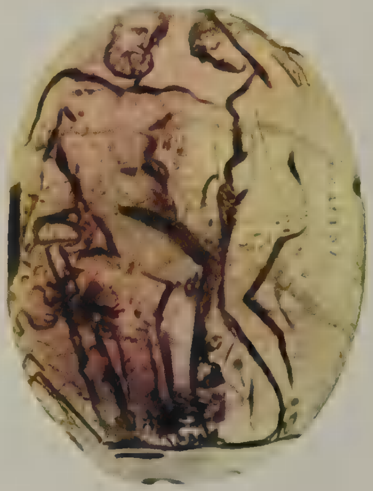
This mirror back is not Greek. The enormous wig that the woman is wearing and the decorative motifs on the bed leave no room for doubt; it is a work of the Flavian era. But we have included it in this series because it seems to offer a particularly good example of how widespread certain motifs could be. And indeed the scene is a typical but perfect pendant, Roman in origin, to the one engraved on the Boston mirror reproduced on page 134, which is certainly Greek and dates from the middle of the fourth century B.C. In essence the motifs are the same in both mirrors. We note in the Roman mirror, apart from a greater heaviness in the execution, an almost excessive concentration on the accessories of the setting, from the little picture hanging on the wall which shows more love-making, also from behind, to objects placed beside the bed. On a stool a tiny puppy is watching the scene curiously. At his right a mouse is drinking from a bronze bowl. Another curious fact is that the woman is not only wearing a wig but is also heavily (and complicatedly) bejewelled. It would be tempting to recognise in the two characters in the mirror scions of Roman high society, but unfortunately this cannot be proved.

- STAMP, FRAGMENT AND MOULDS OF ARRETINE BOWLS

pages 164–7

The Classicism of the Augustan Age was a most appropriate expression of the artistic ideas of the Empire which had just come into being. The drama and pathos of the Greek Baroque were replaced by works of great competence of

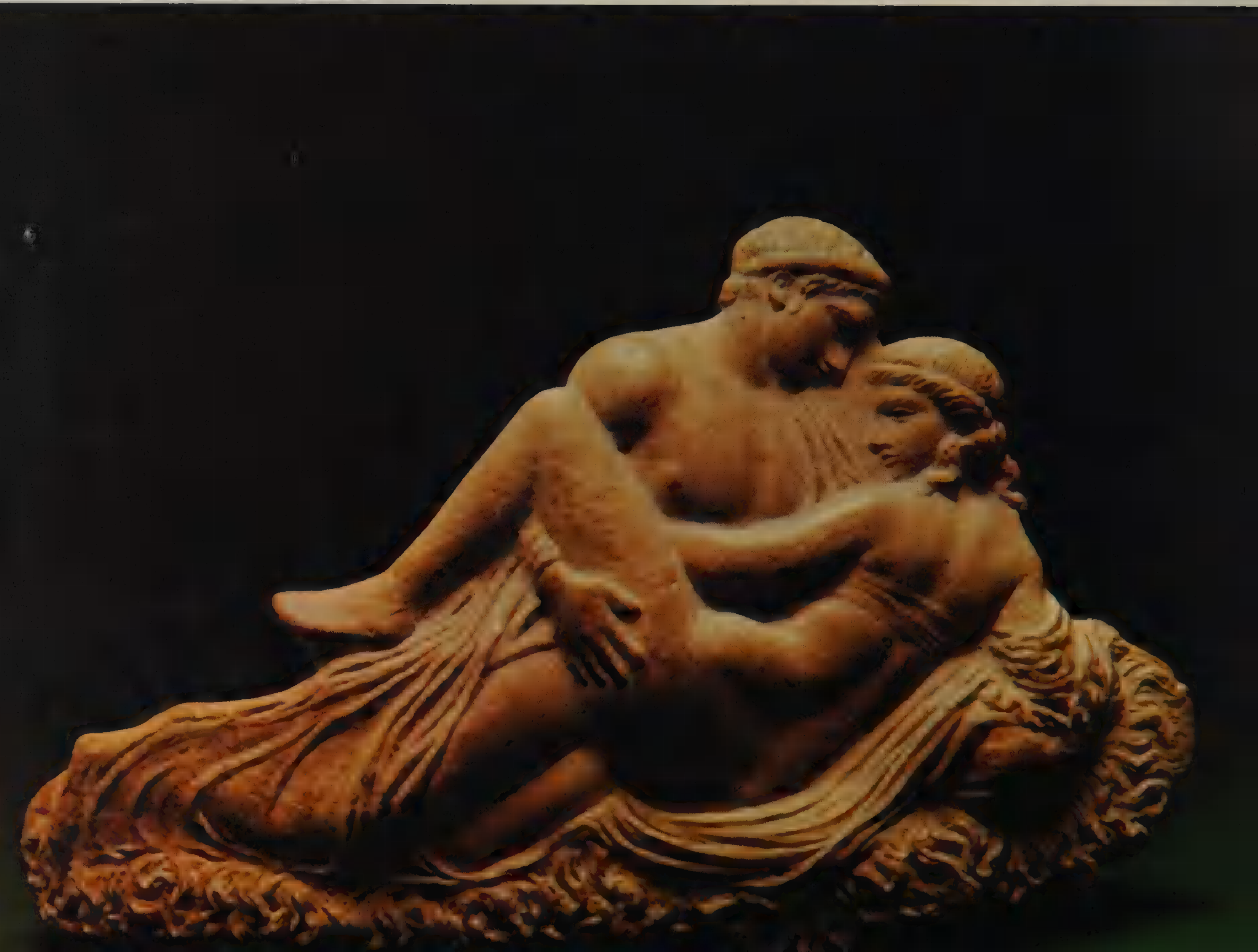
Opposite page
EROTIC SCENE
Bronze mirror.
First century B.C.
Rome: Capitoline Museum.



HERAKLES AND NYMPH
Amethyst intaglio signed by Teukros.
Florence: Archaeological Museum (97). H. 0.025 m

form and balanced in every detail but lacking the freedom and complexity of purpose that marked Hellenistic art. Improvisation and rapid illusionism were replaced by works of perfect rhythm, freely inspired by Greek art of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., which provided the models to follow and imitate. It is difficult to understand why the Augustan Age should have accepted Classicism as its artistic expression rather than the less constricting inspiration to be drawn from the culture of the Hellenistic kingdoms. On one side must have weighed the impression that Classical Greek art had resolved all dramatic conflict into a superior equilibrium: the images of gods and heroes presented an imperturbable calm which to the Romans seemed like a victory over the passions. After a century of civil strife Augustus based his political propaganda on the recreation of peace in the Mediterranean basin; Classical art, because of its apparent imperturbability, seemed just what was needed to express the new ideals of Augustus. And in court circles they must have felt that an art tied to strict rules was more easy to manoeuvre politically.

The finest results of Augustan Classicism were achieved in what are often



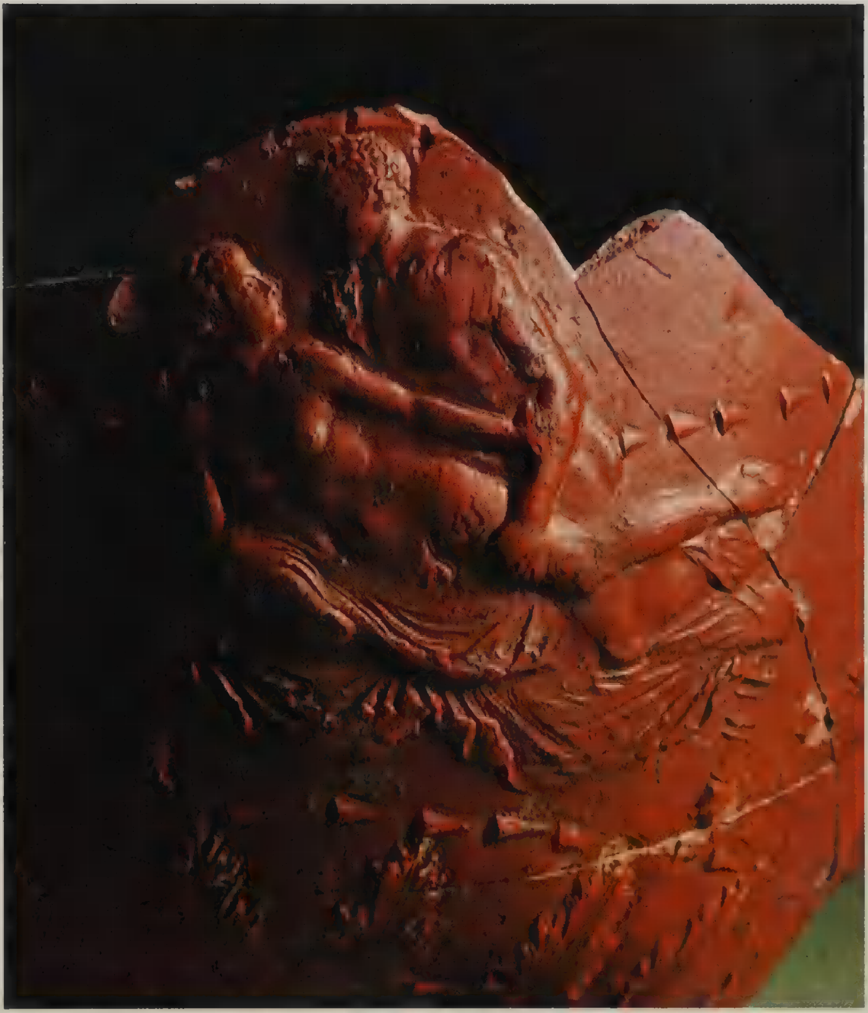
ARRETINE BOWL STAMP
Terracotta.
40–20 B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen.

called the 'minor arts': craftsmen often found just the right balance between the Greek tradition and the new cultural requirements. In Arezzo the vase-maker Marcus Perennius began the production of Arretine bowls around 30 B.C. These vases, of a splendid coral-red, are in highly refined shapes decorated carefully in relief with human figures and floral motifs. These were generally inspired by the prized bronze vases of Asia or Alexandria; often, however, the vivacity of the scenes on the Greek vases and bronzes was enhanced by images of crystalline purity, but motionless, as though frozen timelessly. Such is the case with these splendid groups where the soft, smooth, naked bodies stand out against cushions and covers that create a chiaroscuro background of great decorative effect.

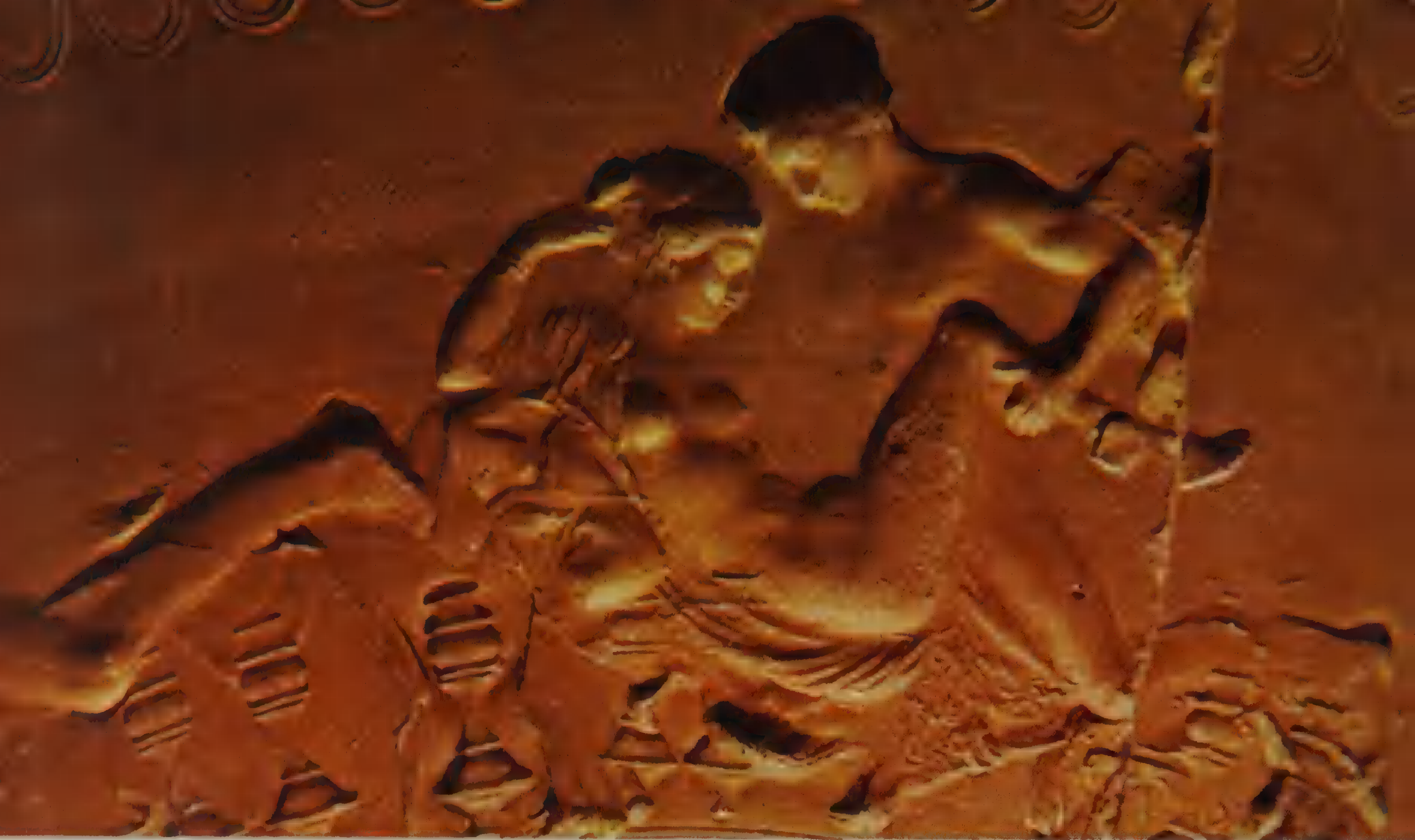
The stamp, the mould and the fragment of Arretine bowls are all of the Augustan period, from a phase in the production that takes its name from Marcus Perennius Tigranes, perhaps a freed slave of Marcus Perennius.

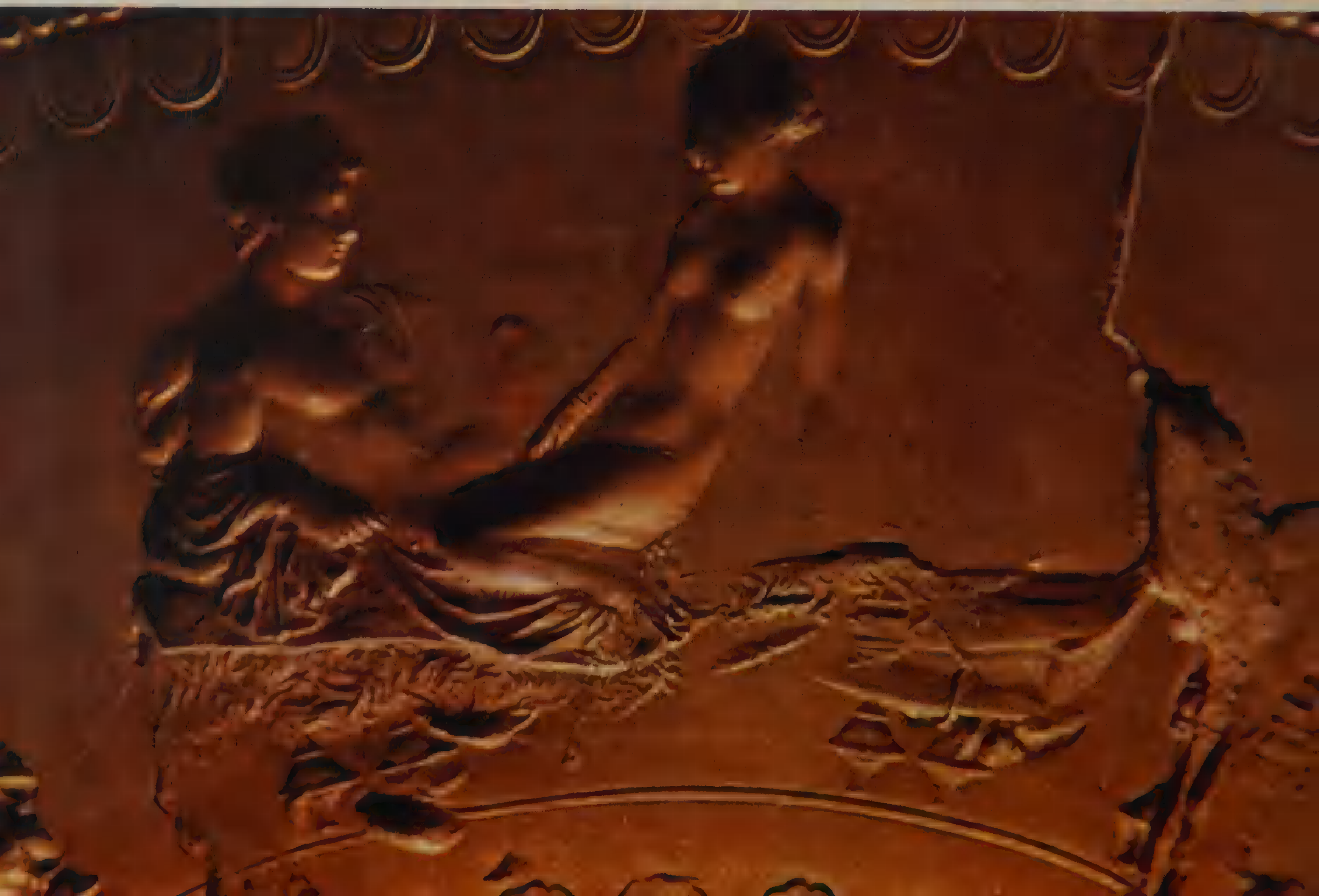
From many points of view the Arretine bowls are the last to show clear evidence of Greek influence.

Pages 166–7
ARRETINE BOWL MOULDS
Terracotta.
40–20 B.C.
Berlin: Staatliche Museen.



FRAGMENT OF ARRETINE BOWL
Terracotta.
40–20 B.C.
Boston: Museum of Fine Arts
(13.109).





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